

# WIRE

THE WIRE ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC  
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# BJÖRK

As serious as your life. By David Toop

Q-Bert Pandit Pran Nath  
Stereolab Mike Patton

Lester Bangs Stephan Mathieu Gregg Bendian Radu Malfatti Lightning Bolt Patti Smith Crass









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Book photographed by David Sims

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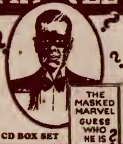
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## > HIM

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FATCD15

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## > HILMAR ÖRN HILMARSSON & SIGUR RÓS

'Angels of the Universe'  
FATOST-CD01

From celebrated Icelandic director, Fróðrikur Thór Fríðriksson, 'Angels of the Universe' is one of the country's most successful films ever. Composed by Hilmar Örn Hilmarsson, with Sigur Rós contributing two tracks, the release of this soundtrack also sees a 10-date screening of the film in October at selected independent cinemas across the UK - the first time the film has been seen in this country.

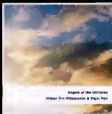
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# Letters

Write to: Letters, *The Wire*, 35 Little Russell Street, London WC1A 2HH, UK

Fax +44 (0)20 7436 5760, email [letters@thewire.co.uk](mailto:letters@thewire.co.uk)

Letters must include a full name and address



Delia Derbyshire

## Derbyshire day

Regarding the Delia Derbyshire obituary (*The Wire* 210), I thought I'd add some thoughts of my own on one of the great unsung electronic music heroes. As Robin Carmody mentioned, she is best known for her recording and arrangement of Ron Grainer's *Dr Who* theme music. What he neglected to mention, however, was that this was her electronic recreation of Les Structures Sonores, the wonderful glass sound sculptures created in the early 50s by the French Baschet Brothers, who inspired her electronic swoops, which in turn predicted Kraftwerk by nearly a decade.

Derbyshire grew up in the bombed out remains of Coventry. Many of her first memories revolved around the air raid sirens, all clear whistles and symphonic cacophony of millions of tons of explosives dropping night after night. With the wild chaos of fire engines, the ravenous crackle of the post-BlitZ firestorms and droning sound waves of a thousand Herivel engines, it is not surprising she developed an incredible command of aural synthesis and the electronic symphony.

After a rejection by Decca on the grounds of her gender, Derbyshire was hired by the BBC in 1960. The Radiophonic Workshop had recently been set up by Glynis Glyn in 1958, after the Beeb were convinced that they should have a studio on a par with those in Paris, Milan and Cologne, where Stockhausen, Varèse, Berio et al were achieving some stunning results. The major difference, however, was that the BBC soon tired of long hours put into pieces of cutting edge music that in the early 60s were still mainly pulling in bewildered criticism from Outrage of Upton-On-Sea. Derbyshire, though, had a great passion for the work going on at Endhouse, Putney, Ghent and the other brave new studios, and her visits were massive recompense for the anonymity imposed by the draconian powers at the BBC. This is not to say that awards were out of the question: her impressive collaboration with Roberto Gerhard, *The Angel Of Achilles*, won the Italia prize. Luckily, before the accountants marched in during the early 70s and the golden age faded, some incredible soundscapes and music were created. Indeed, a whole generation was brought up on Bleep And Booster and the Cyberman as the soundtrack to their lives, not to mention the host of strange local radio idents and sound effects on which she also worked.

Her best works were created in Maida Vale's DeLaware Road studio in West London, using loops of tape (sometimes over 50 feet long), mynad tape

manipulations and editing techniques (actually the birth of what we now call sampling) and the generation of sound from purely electronic sources. The equipment available was very limited and equally scarce: BBC policy at the time was "you can have anything you like — from redundant stores". She would normally work at night in order to have the use of all the separate studio facilities — filters and oscillators. She would take great joy in analysing, say, the 12 most dominant harmonics in a green glass lampshade and resynthesizing it with crude square wave oscillators in order to have control over the sound properties she was after.

She was forever hustling some group of long haired oddballs who arrived at the Workshop over to Peter Zinovieff's far more interesting, fertile and downright freaky EMS Putney Studio, where Zinovieff conjured up mirages with Birtwistle, Henze and a handful of others, while producing some of the most sought-after electronic instruments of the day. This music is finally going to see the light of day via Space Age Recordings.

While still at the BBC, Derbyshire was involved in two important mid-60s ensembles: the mercenary and innovative Unit Delta Plus, who put on various early happenings in 1966 and 1967 (including one "rave" at the Roundhouse in Camden, featuring the only performance of the first Beatles acid tape music, *Carnival Of Light*), and the equally unique White Noise whose 1970 Island LP, *An Electric Storm*, has some sublime moments.

In the early 70s Derbyshire left London, the BBC and Kaleidophon and Electrophone studios and, unable to cope with the demands of the times, gave up recording music. A quiet life in Cumbria in the north of England followed, until a serious bout of cancer and the death of her mother brought her back to the Midlands where she settled in Northampton for the last 20 years of her life. Here she spent hours each day researching the mathematical and harmonic relationships within the dimensions of buildings, particularly Chartres cathedral, and generally listened to the radio, giving much thought to modern electronic sound and her particular distaste for synthesis that "recreated" existing instruments. She was unfortunately taken quite suddenly by renal failure brought on by a constant alcohol habit developed during long hours at the Beeb. Unfortunately, Derbyshire still had far more ideas to try. In fact, her last project was looking into the musical possibilities in shapeshifting alloys. I kid you not.

I was in the process of compiling new pieces with her

when she died, but Experimental Audio Research's *Vibrations LP* (Rocket Girl, 2000) and its forthcoming companion disc *Continuum* (Space Age) were the last works to which she contributed in the production and creative role. It was her dream to set up an organisation (MESMA — Mult: Sensory Electronic Music, Sound & Arts) providing a national focus for experimental electronic music, with a heavy leaning towards environmental/interactive multi-sensory events — equally inspiring, educational, stimulating and recreational. The Website [www.delia Derbyshire.com](http://www.delia Derbyshire.com), set up with her full cooperation, is the best source of info. **Sonic Boom (EAR/Spectrum)** via email

## The other Mother

It was a great pleasure to find family friends Makoto Kawabata and his Acid Mothers splashed throughout *The Wire* 210. It should be noted, however, that the caption for the photo on page 34 misidentifies current AMTAMPUFO drummer Yashimatsu Ichiraku (the 'I' in Otomo Yoshihide's ISO) as bassist Atsushi Tsuyama. The mysterious stand-in second from right is Tsuyama. **Christopher Stephens** Kobe, Japan

## Identity crisis

Regarding Julian Cowley's review of Oorgan's CD *0/5Shot Via Margaron* (*The Wire* 210), I'd like to point out that I'm Luciano Margaroni, guitarist with the Italian improv rock group La 1919 (*The Wire* reviewed two of our CDs some years ago) and that Roberto Zanasi is another music engineer for my nylon-string guitar session on that CD, which means we are two separate individuals. Anyway, thanks for the review. **Luciano Margaroni** Milan, Italy

## Making 'Head lines

Congratulations on your Radiohead cover story (*The Wire* 209). Loved the editorial about needing to engage with the marketplace, but it must have been a teeth-clenching one to have to write. On a minor point, although it is not the complete Radiohead lyric you refer to, Robbie Williams is another million-selling act to have inserted "Come and have a go if you think you're hard enough" into a song ("Millennium"). I'd love to think he inspired the sad poppets' use of the phrase.

Now I'm as partial to a little party-faced, jaunty guitar indie shoe-gazer music as the next, and Radiohead are obviously at the top of the current crop, but their



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#### Irmin Schmidt & Kuno

*Medians of the Universe*

(03 69 68)

This album sees legendary Can founder Schmidt teaming up with electronic producer and classical arranger Kuno. The pair have also been commissioned to create a sound sculpture for the Barbican Electronic Festival in October and play the London Jazz Festival in November.



#### Anita Lane

*Sixx (CD) (C)*

(03 29 82)

Enthusiastic Red Seeds member Lane releases her most accomplished work to date, co-written and produced by long-term collaborator Mark Hewitt. Doors, dirty romanticism, beautiful, delicate with a sexy dash here. [M+]



#### Einstürzende Neubauten *Stratagems Against Architecture II*

(03 69 68)

These tape-like songs of sound radicals are a compilation of some highlights from the past decade. There's a tape from Tabla Rasa, Science is Sexy + Smile 1991, The Industrial Lullaby of the Apocryphus [M+]



#### Fad Gadget

*The Best of*

(03 69 68)

Released to coincide with his forthcoming four-volume box set, *Devenir Mode*, the Best of Fad Gadget includes the electronic power's early 80s rave tracks and a remix from Brandon. He mixed each with the 80s in a way that would have been for [M+]





## Letters

proximity to Reich, The Residents and Terry Riley in my record collection is largely alphabetical. I hope bumper sales put *The Wire* on a sufficiently secure financial footing to avoid doing it again.

**Mark Capleton** via email

DK, Annasick might not be the most outrageous sonic experiment of the year. But, take a step outside of our little closet of sonic transcendence and you will see how the world is collapsing in a sweet (icky) melodic meltdown. Look again at this 'safe' band and you will understand the tools they are using because they're part of our loved sonic transcendence. Only then, outside, within the air everybody breathes, you will see how great this band are. So save your apologies.

Radiohead not only deserve your cover, we need to support bands like them in order to spread the sounds we love. In order to take the inside outside.

**Veronica Bujaro** Mexico DF, Mexico

Taking into account *The Wire*'s issue featuring Radiohead, I think it would be great to include a Primer for the future on artists motivated by political activism, from Jello Biafra to Ultrared, Bob Marley to The Clash.

**Jon Knowles** via email

## Rip-off merchants

The Letters page in issue 209 had more than a whiff of the conventional rock magazine about it, with debate at the base level of 'my band's better than yours', or more precisely, 'my band did it before yours'. The music championed by *The Wire*, fractured by extreme postmodernism, indicates the impossibility of producing a music derived purely from one source, as correspondent Soly Zachariasen suggests PJ Harvey's is derivative of Patti Smith. Such is the synthesis generated by multiple cross-cultural wires that it's pretty easy to come up with music similar to sounds that have never been fed directly into your ears. I was once told that the band I was in sounded like US fucup rockers Shudder To Think. Several years later I actually listened to some of their stuff and realised how close to the mark it was.

I'm not suggesting that Patti's never heard Patti, or Thom's never heard Torbjørn, but whether these sources were incidental or inspirational to their own music is unimportant. The fact is that (the playwright commonly known as) Shakespeare ripped the story off an earlier play doesn't stop *Hamlet* being pretty good. The fact that an artist has been in the charts doesn't mean they can only produce crap (and I sometimes need reminding of that, too – thanks Ian Penman for giving me the courage to buy *Miss E...* So Addictive).

Keep celebrating all that sounds... well, just all sounds, really.

**Tom Sutton** Sheffield, UK

## Miles schmiles

Re: Bill Shoemaker's Review of Miles Davis At Fillmore East 1970 (Soundcheck, The Wire 209): Bill is in error when he says, "... with no official recordings existing prior to the release of this newly discovered Fillmore East set" by the third great Miles Davis quintet. He must have missed the release of the amazing, very official 1969 Miles – Festival De Juan Pans, released by CBS/Sony Japan in 1993 (SRC6843 CD).

And why ignore the great 'unofficial' recordings released by the likes of JMY, Jazz Door, Moon and Nippon Crown? These concerts really took place, Bill and Miles was continuing to be inspired by Wayne Shorter in this period, as Wayne was pioneering this direction on his own Blue Note records, *Odyssey Of Iska*, *Super Nova* and *Moto Grosso Fino*.

**Ricky Frystak** Los Angeles, USA

## Supply and demand

I do enjoy your magazine and it informs me greatly about the sort of music that I enjoy. But I do get very frustrated because it is often hard to obtain the music you review. For example, in *The Wire* 209 you reviewed Morton Subotnick's Volume 1: *Electronic Works* (Mode Records). In the Directory Mode is listed as being distributed by Harmonia Mundi, whose Website I visited, but the site has no knowledge of anything by Subotnick. So where do I go from here? Where do you get the records from? There seems little point in reading the magazine if I can't locate the material.

**Adrian Zakrzewski** via email

We don't do it on purpose. We compile the Directory as a service precisely because we review so many records that are not easily available: wherever possible we aim to supply contact details and distribution information for each label. The Harmonia Mundi Website is primarily a database of the Harmonia Mundi classical label, but it does contain a listing of all the other labels stocked in the warehouse. Of the Subotnick title, a spokesman says it is now in stock. It should be possible to order any title carried by Harmonia Mundi from most good record shops. There are also many mail order companies that specialise in the kind of music we feature. Try any of the advertisers in the back pages for starters – Ed

## Glorious DIN

I have been meaning to contact you and let you know how fantastic the free Index21 DIN CD is which came with *The Wire* 208. It is probably the best CD I have received so far as a subscriber. That is not to say that I don't appreciate *The Wire* Tapper series. But the

music on the DIN label appeals to my ears completely. I will be in contact with the label directly to order some of their albums. Thanks again for all the good reporting that you do, and furthermore that label promo idea should become a regular feature if possible.

**Colin Dublin**, Ireland

## Aural porn

It's all your fault. I have piles of CDs all over my flat. I tried one large pile, but it kept falling over whenever I tried to get one out. This wouldn't be so bad but problem is these are just the CDs I haven't even played once yet. There's no way I can begin to get to grips with these different styles. I end up a dilettante, chopping and changing between Japanese noise freak outs, dub rereleases, Detroit Techno, New York minimalism, sinking from live improv and other less definable stuff like the drum 'n' bass mixed with Bulgarian fiddle music. As a result I'm failing to even know how to listen to each different subgenre.

I'm starting to think that the role *The Wire* serves is musical porn for the jaded. How many others spend half the time reading it just being amused at the 'wacky' ideas without ever bothering to actually listen to it. I loved reading about Hermann Nitsch's abattoir-tastic recordings, or the guy who plugs the sampler output into the input socket and records the sound of its own internal workings (Toshimaru Nakamura, presumably – Ed). But with all the stuff I already can't absorb, I'm hardly going to try these as well.

To be fair, I am not accusing *The Wire* itself of dilettantism. You've got fine writers such as Brian Duguid and Steve Barker who really do know their areas, as well as the likes of Biba Kopf or David Toop who can take a broad yet esoteric approach. The only solution I can see is to cancel my subscription and move to a remote island with all these CDs to slowly assimilate them over next year. The only problem with this solution is that I don't know what I'd do for musical porn.

**Mark Winkelmann** Dublin, Ireland

## Corrections

**Issue 210** In the Electronics in Brief, Tennis's Europe On Horseback CD was stated to be on Expanding Records. It is actually released by BHPop.

In HipHop in Brief, the sample on The Coup's "Five Million Ways To Kill A Cee" was incorrectly identified. It is from the P-Funk All-Stars "Hydraulic Pump".

In the Directory, World Serpent, who distribute Xhol Caravan's *Motherfuckers Live* (Durtro), was omitted. Their details are: Unit 7-1-7 Seager Buildings, Brookmill Road, London SE8 4HL. FQ CD B694 2677 mailorder@worldserpent.demon.co.uk

www.worldserpent.co.uk. Moth Records' address was incorrect. It is: PO Box 20459, London SE17 3WN. □

## Coming next month

# Exploratory Music From Portugal CD

With the October issue of *The Wire*, all subscribers worldwide will receive a free copy of *Exploratory Music From Portugal*, a special compilation from the Atlantic avant garde. Turn to the inside back cover for more details.

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# Lightning Bolt

Crazy Metal thunder. By Lee Gardner



When it comes to electricity, they say it's not the volts that kill you, it's the amps. No one has ever died at a show by Lightning Bolt, a supercharged energy rock duo from Rhode Island, but not for lack of amperes or amplifiers. Bassist Brian Gibson plays standing in front of a towering stack of tube heads and mismatched speaker cabinets that generate a withering 2600 watts of sonic thrust, assuming he hasn't burned up or blown out anything vital lately. He never even bothers with the house PA. Meanwhile, drummer Brian Chippendale pounds out a relentless barrage of chopped up blast beats and kit-smashing rolls. Yet there is an organized chaos, full of harp turns, with hammered-on arpeggios and folkish melodies emerging from Gibson's chest-crushing blare. It's as if Blue Cheer reformed specifically to tackle the ecstatic duo explorations of *Interstellar Space*. In the small, spartan rooms that make up the US East Coast underground rock circuit, the effect is nothing short of devastating.

"From the beginning, we've had this mentality that's been pretty consistent," the surprisingly soft-spoken Gibson says. "When we started playing, our big thing was [Chippendale] going nuts the whole time and me turning up as loud as I could and just going crazy. Over time I think it has refined, but for the most part, we started off crazy and have been crazy ever since."

Lightning Bolt first struck at the prestigious Rhode Island School of Design, where printmaker Chippendale met painter Gibson in 1994. But the duo's true roots lie in Fort Thunder, a collective artists' studio/living quarters/music venue Chippendale co-founded in an old industrial building near the RISD campus in 1995. The Thunderers were evicted this past July (the building is being ready to make way for a shopping center), but during its six-year existence the space not only provided a home and workspace for Chippendale and others, it gave the duo a place to practise as often and as loud as they wanted, and a handy forum for shows. Lightning Bolt is just one group in a wave of aggressive, chaotic outfits to come out of Providence in the past decade, including Men's Recovery Project, Six Finger Satellite, Arab On Radar, the Olneyville Sound System and Forcefield, many of whom have honed their attack in

part at Fort Thunder. Liking the scene's sound to the rebirth of No Wave, as many observers do, is overly simplistic—there's a world of difference between the throbbing oscillators of Forcefield and the ecstatic racketeering of Lightning Bolt. But these groups and their offshoots, fuelled by a steady supply of antsy art students, do share a penchant for finding ever more creative ways to be wilder, noisier and more absurd. "It's a competitive atmosphere in a town with a lot of musicians," Chippendale says of the Providence sound. "People push each other and the music seems to get more extreme."

After cutting his teeth on old school leather Metal and new school thrash titans like Metallica and Slayer, Chippendale discovered more expansive, hard to categorise extremism, such as splatter rock trio Uransae, the West Coast urban tribalist collective Crash Worship and the Japanese scene, particularly Ruins, although he says that drummer Tatsuya Yoshida was so "light-handed and precise" last time he saw them that he can't relate anymore. "Then," he says, "I just got really into playing every night." Vermont-born Gibson is hesitant to name any specific influences. "When I started playing with Brian, I dropped everything I listened to because I really wanted to focus," he says. "His drumming didn't sound like anything I'd heard before, so I felt obligated to also be doing something unique."

While Lightning Bolt's basic approach has remained more or less intact over seven years and two albums (a self-titled 1999 debut and the recent *Ride The Skies*, both on Providence's Load Records), the duo have indeed made refinements. The punishing volume isn't just macho overkill. In the beginning, when Gibson struggled with inadequate amps fuzzing out at maximum volume, "Melody wasn't an option." The lo-fi clamor of the group's largely improvised debut album, a self-titled vinyl-only release put out by Load in 1999, and due to be reissued in October, approximates the muddiness effect. His current monster stack, however, allows him to cut through and across Chippendale's fusillade; on *Ride The Skies*'s "Saint Jacques" he even wests the singsong tune of "Fritre Jacques" from a

well of din using his secret weapon, a pitchshifter pedal. An early version of the line-up included local eccentric vocalist/percussionist Haham Bharioocha. When he quit, Chippendale upped the ante on Lightning Bolt's playful side by gibbering into a mic stuffed in his mouth and held in place with a bazaar mask. *Ride The Skies*'s "The Faire Folk" finds the pair exploring their more tuneful side as Chippendale, sounding like a stoned squirrel singing to himself under a paper cup, croons along with the subdued arpeggios; on "Wea Ones Parade" the same squirrel, agitated now, engages in a call and response cutting contest with Gibson's overmodulated four string.

Even though *Ride The Skies* brings Lightning Bolt's sound back alive so that you can feel every slinging needle of Gibson's distortion, there is no substitute for being trapped in the same room with it, an experience made all the more unnerving by their performance tactics. The duo prefer to set up on the floor down in front or in a little-used corner, giving audience members intimate access to Gibson's roar and Chippendale's sweaty athletic frenzy. ("I'm looking to exhaust myself," he says. "I don't know how to achieve satisfaction at a show otherwise.") They also give unwary audience members a shock when they burst into their set before the previous act's final notes die away. "Downtime between bands is so boring," Chippendale shrugs. "It's fun to keep things going. We also get to ride off whatever momentum the other band brings."

After touring the US for a third time this summer, Lightning Bolt headed into the studio to record a third album for Load. It turns out, however, that these volume dealers aren't actually all that fond of noise when they're not making it themselves. "I just like silence," Chippendale says, pointing out that they don't listen to music in the van while on tour. "Now I spend more time walking around with earplugs. When you play so much, you get burnt out on sound." Gibson chimes in that he used to try to fall asleep while listening to music but found it impossible: "It's a really powerful thing." ☐ *Ride The Skies* and Lightning Bolt are out now on Load Records



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**naïve**



# Gregg Bendian

It's clobberin' time.  
By Edwin Pouncey



Graphic score: Gregg Bendian with (above) a Fourth World portrait by Jack Kirby

"Kirby's Fourth World period was sort of like when Miles went electric," enthuses jazz percussionist Gregg Bendian about the inspirational force behind his improvised tribute to Jack "King" Kirby, the late comic book artist. "It's not something that's been grasped and fully celebrated until now. Today I hear everybody talking about his Fourth World stuff and I'm thinking, where were these people in 1972?" Ask Bendian what he was doing in the year that Kirby's revolutionary "Fourth World" comic series hit the streets — epic sagas based on Kirby's experience as a soldier under Patton in World War Two that tackled fascism, bio-engineering, Norse mythology and other subjects unheard of in comics at the time — and he'll explain that he was embroiled in writing, performing and listening to music, while attempting to make his own mark as an original comics draftsman. "I drew superheroes and monsters," he reveals. "I really studied but I just didn't develop the chops quickly enough to overcome my music interests, which came quickly. So at the same time that I'm reading these comic books I'm playing in jazz groups and in the school orchestra. That came very naturally to me, whereas comics were something I had to work very hard at and wasn't getting a lot of results." That early decision to become a successful musician rather than a pretend comic book artist has resulted in an impressive list of performing and recording dates with such notable improvisors as Cecil Taylor, William Parker, Derek Bailey and Peter Brotzmann. Bendian also plays vibas in his own interzone group where he is joined by brothers Nels and Alex Cline on electric guitar and drums respectively and bass player Joel Hamilton. Together they have recorded three albums, the latest of which is *Requiem For Jack Kirby*, Bendian's personal homage to the man who helped shape his imagination and subliminally spurred him on to compose his own fantastical creations.

"The world of imagination that comic books opened up for me really fed into my being able to abstract and think about music in very colourful and textural terms," he explains. "I've always been inspired by visual art for my music. Paul Klee and Marc Chagall have also had a big influence."

But it was the exploding graphic galaxies which opened up in Jack Kirby's comic strip panels (a striking example of which appears on *Requiem's* cover) that Bendian found himself most affected by, especially the aforementioned Fourth World period which Kirby embarked upon during the early 70s after leaving Marvel Comics (where he had helped fashion the company by creating the *Fantastic Four* with writer/editor Stan Lee) to join rival comic publisher DC. It was there he produced what Bendian considers to be his finest work. "He really had his finger on the pulse of what people were thinking about," extolls Bendian. "The trumvirate for me is really *New Gods*, *The Forever People* and *Mr. Miracle*. I found that when I went back to the *New Gods* and *Mr. Miracle* anthologies, I was much more amazed than when I was a kid. I had the dual experience of being transported back, but I also looked at this as if for the first time, saying, 'This man was really on to something'. He didn't care, he just wanted to tell the story and present these images, no matter how shocking they were."

To transfer the power that he had absorbed by studying Kirby's line into music, however, Bendian chose to concentrate on the more abstract forms that harlie through his Fourth World work. "People in the comics world have responded to how abstract it is and noticed that it is Kirbyesque in that vein," he explains. "I'm not creating a cartoon soundtrack, I think that would be writing down to it and I wouldn't want to do that. I think it deserves something symphonic and operatic, and I would really have loved to have the

budget to do this as a big orchestral piece.

Instead Bendian and Interzone have produced a series of equally effective jazz ensemble pieces, all of which are connected to certain specific images running through Kirby's work. "Mother Box", as Bendian explains, "refers to this very mysterious little kind of computer chip which he was talking about in the early 70s which now people accept as being a standard thing," while "Air Above Zenn-La" attempts to musically capture the aura surrounding the Silver Surfer, one of Kirby's most famous creations, as he soars through the skies on his cosmic surfboard. "Truly, I am very pleased by the fact that it's played by a jazz band," admits Bendian. "What we tried to do was treat the jazz band as a chamber ensemble or as an orchestra and get the most out of that. That was similar to Kirby trying to get an epic film out of some newspaper pages with some ink. I think that was what we were trying to do, like push the envelope the way that he did."

On a previous record Bendian and guitarist Nels Cline revisited John Coltrane and Rashied Ali's interstellar Space sessions. Was there, I wondered, any creative connection for Bendian in that musical partnership and the artistic one which Kirby shared with Stan Lee during the peak of their fame together at Marvel Comics? "You see a marked difference in style from Kirby on his own and Jack with Stan," he agrees, "and when they were interviewed they couldn't always remember who had come up with what. That's like *Dizzy Gillespie* finishing *Bird's* phrases. People improvising together and having such a language that they can complete each other's thoughts and embellish upon theme and variation. I think music and comics have that. It's storytelling, but it's also much more abstract." | Interzone's *Requiem For Jack Kirby* is out now on *Atavistic*. Jack Kirby's *New Gods*, *The Forever People* and *Fourth World* featuring *Mr. Miracle* are out now, published by DC Comics







# Radu Malfatti

Silent but deadly. By Dan Warburton



Austrian trombonist/composer Radu Malfatti recently walked offstage in France. "Fire engines and helicopters are OK," he declares, "but I don't find it easy to perform in front of a noisy crowd. I'd rather stop torturing them."

Noise may have lost its power to offend. Silence hasn't. What shocked the French public was not the raucous sound expected from the trombone, but the lengthy silences between the bare handful of notes Malfatti produced from it in the course of an hour. Percussionist Paul Lovens described Malfatti's composition for string quartet, *Des Profils Des Schwengens* (The Profile Of Silence), as "the most extreme thing I've ever heard". Over its 30 minute duration not a single note is played straight – when a note is played at all.

Born in Innsbruck in 1943, Malfatti studied in Graz before heading to Amsterdam and Aachen, where he got to partner the likes of Lovens, bassist Peter Kowald and fellow trombonist Paul Rutherford. Moving to London in 1972, he found himself at the heart of the jazz/improv scene, playing with Elton Dean's Ninesense, Chris McGregor's Brotherhood Of Breath, forming Nica with Nick Evans, and working with Derek Bailey, Evan Parker, John Stevens and Phil Wachsmann. During the late 70s and 80s he travelled to Europe for dates with such RMP stalwarts as Misha Mengelberg's ICP Tentet, Fred Van Hove's MIA Blek, his own Orkiste, Barry Guy's London Jazz Composers Orchestra, Wolfgang Fuchs's King Übu Orchestra and the News From The Shed quintet, with Lovens, John Russell, John Butcher and Phil Durrant. By now he was becoming increasingly frustrated with the improvising aesthetic. "It became clear that improvisers had to act and react in a precise way to be accepted," he contends. "Rules" emerged, certain ways of playing were "forbidden" and became unacceptable. Things stagnated and a pure, idiomatic way of playing was born. Today, improvised music must be "active" or "energy loaded" to be interesting or "successful". It's too easy: there's no punch left like there was when it

was fresh and necessary. Young improvisers are almost all imitating the old lads, still thinking they're "free" and "inventive". They have no idea where it all came from."

The realisation that he was stagnating came to Malfatti onstage in Italy in September 1993. "I suddenly thought: 'You don't want to do this anymore, do you?'" he remembers. "I got angry with myself, and when I got home, I sat down and wrote a piece for solo trombone, *"Die Temperatur Der Bedeutung"* ("The Temperature Of Meaning"), precisely to overcome my old routine, leave it behind." Lasting 33 minutes and 20 seconds (a favourite Malfatti duration, punning on the speed of vinyl albums), *"Die Temperatur..."* specifies nothing more than particular methods of blowing into the trombone (at particular angles, or with certain "specified shapes of the mouth cavity"). Its short, chilly blasts of metallic noise are interspersed with long, sometimes seemingly endless, stretches of silence.

Malfatti makes no distinction between improvised and composed music. "It doesn't really matter if one piece is improvised and another composed if they're both moving in the same direction," he states. "Almost all the music which mercilessly surrounds us today has the same underlying structure: neverending gabgabs. What's the difference between MTV music and most of the classical avant garde? They use different material, but they're both intensely talkative. We're surrounded by noises and sensory overstimulation wherever we go. For me, the true avant garde is the critical analysis or issue-taking with our cultural surroundings. What's needed is not faster, higher, stronger, louder – I want to know about the full in the storm."

Given his fondness for blurring the lines between composition and improvisation, it was perhaps inevitable that Malfatti should become involved with Polwechsel, alongside bassist Werner Dafeldecker, guitarist Burkhard Stang and cellist Michael Moser. In March 1994, he joined the Wandelweiser Group, a Berlin ensemble of composer/performers founded by

Antoine Beuger and Burkhard Schiothauer, whose interest, according to Malfatti, is "the evaluation and integration of silence(s) rather than an ongoing carpet of neverending sounds". The group run their own publishing house and record label, Timescraper, which released Malfatti's solo trombone piece and his string quartet in 1997. Reconciling the austere Wandelweiser aesthetic with the often raw Polwechsel sound eventually led Malfatti to leave the quartet, whose other members felt uncomfortable playing his "Sprachlos" ("Speechless", subsequently issued on Timescraper's companion label Zeitkratzer), which required them to remain silent for long periods. Though "fired" from Polwechsel, Malfatti kept on good terms. Dafeldecker mastered Malfatti's *Beinhaltung*, with analogue synth virtuoso Thomas Lehn and violinist Phil Durrant for the Italian label Fingres in 1997. A later concert by the same trio was released this year as *Dach on Erstwhile*.

Helping us appreciate the sonic richness of the world around us, Malfatti's music arguably works better than pieces such as Cage's notorious 4'33", which provides no reference sound for the listener to take a measure of the other elements of the surrounding "silence". Malfatti's sounds are sufficiently neutral in terms of pitch and rhythm not to interfere with our perception. They're either there or not there, as instantly discernible as they are instantly forgettable.

"The more we are aware of things the better," Malfatti concludes. "Someone once said that we don't use more than 85 per cent of our brain capacity, and I'm sure most folk don't even use that. I assume that this is the underlying structure or meaning of the meditational aspect of certain human knowledge: what happens if we elevate the known into the realm of unknown, the unimportant into the realm of important? We sharpen the consciousness and become aware of the acoustic environment surrounding the music... and the music itself." □ King Übu Orchestra's *Trigger Zone*, featuring Radu Malfatti, is out now on FMP



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# Stephan Mathieu

Phantoms of liberty. By Philip Sherburne

It would be satisfying to think that frequencyLab, the title of Stephan Mathieu's new album on Mile Plateaux sister label Ritornel, has something to do with the way Mathieu liberates frequencies trapped deep within the confines of recorded music and analogue sound. The German artist deftly manipulates software-based composition and editing tools to draw out hidden strands of sound from recordings and acoustic instruments alike, so that deceptively simple loops and fragments, framed and processed almost haphazardly, yield striking crystallizations. On *Heroin* (Staalplaat), a collaboration with Ekkehard Ehlers of Frankfurt duo Autopoiesis (another group obsessed with digitally transforming prerecorded phonographic snippets), samples from Sigur Rós, Supertramp and even Vince Guaraldi's *Peanuts* soundtracks are re-presented with only the slightest modification. But it's enough to show the originals in a brand new light, running them through the filters of memory and distraction to create "nostalgic" versions: they sound less like the songs themselves, than the way you remember them. As a remixer, Mathieu applies the same extractive strategy: from Laub's lumbering "Augenschmelz" (on the Berlin group's remix collection *Infusion*) he elicits a liquid stream of clicks and gurgles for his icy "Welt Weg" mix, restructuring the song around a gorgeous guitar pattern that's almost inaudible in the original. Meanwhile, his first album on Ritornel, 2000's *Wurmloch Variationen* (Wormhole Variations), took an opposite strategy, as he dubbed a simple recording of acoustic piano again and again, burying the green melodic shoos in blizzard upon blizzard of static and hiss. Even so, it flirts with the same overarching interest in layers and obfuscation, as well as conforming to a strikingly consistent sound.

Mathieu isn't surprised to hear listeners ascribe to him a signature sound. "That's what people said about me as a drummer," he says. "As a drummer my main

interest was my analogue instrument was the very small, microtonal richness of drums and cymbals." Mathieu's upbringing as a drummer might seem to be an unusual route to his present day experimental microsound, but it deeply informed his current approach. Although he had first tried out a set of traps at the age of ten, he was turned on to European free jazz a decade later when he saw Paul Lovens play in his home town of Saarbrücken in the west of Germany with the Alex von Schlippenbach Trio, which "sounded more like someone playing with a toolbox than playing beats. It touched me deeply," he remembers. "It opened a whole new world of rhythm that I knew from my very inside." Mathieu discovered his compositional approach in listening to these internal rhythms. "I used to prepare my drums with selected materials, playing them more like a sound generator," he explains. "I often thought of it as a real-to-real tape machine playing back tiny shreds of pop music history in the back of my head."

From 1990 to 1998, Mathieu collaborated with electronic guitarist Dierk Rupp in a group called Stöl, releasing one EP on Algen and one on Kitz-Yo before disbanding just before finishing their first album. He's relatively taciturn about the project — "Stöl is an old, rusty story of love and hate, so I don't think about it too often," he grumbles — but the last recording sessions, undertaken in a studio which had just invested in an extensive ProTools set-up, introduced him to digital methodologies. "I was absolutely fascinated by the possibilities you have if you 'see' sound," he remembers. "So I learned a digital way to process my drum kit as a wide extension of what I did with metal, wood and the kum." You can hear this process in play on his Summer EP for Timeblind, in which the hum of tube cymbals is passed out into a vast, joint-the-dots bitmapped image, infinitely extended, as metaphysical poet John Donne put it, like bronze to

any thinness beat.

"When I started with digital music it was mainly for the reason that I wanted to produce my drums in the way I wanted them to sound," Mathieu explains. "I saw that there are so many musical possibilities inside a natural sound, so I immediately forgot about giving constructed beats a try and continued with what I did by playing drums with my hands and body, a music of sound."

Even today, the computer remains just one component of a broad, interlinked array of methodologies, rather than the be all and end all of Mathieu's music. "I don't work with any external electronic or digital sound-producing media like synths or MIDI gear," he claims. "I'm interested in creating a possible essence of certain sounds, or even of an existing piece of music. I'm not interested in computer music or creating sound with the computer. I want to have the spirit of the source I'm processing in the music I'm creating."

Like Fennesz, who distills the hyperchromatic logic of The Beach Boys into an uncanny textural essence, Mathieu takes a liberal approach to pop, one less grounded in structure than in a hard to pinpoint constellation of sound, memory and perception. "I think that comes from personal sound ideals," he says. "In general I love a certain 'pop appeal,' especially in abstract musics, and even the other way round, like with Radiohead. I think their music is so beautiful, and in a strange way it's very abstract for the world of pop. It's nice to think that there are so many people running around these days with the same sound in their heads that there is in mine."

frequencyLab is out now on Ritornel. Stephan Mathieu & Ekkehard Ehlers's *Heroin* is out now on Staalplaat. *Fall Swing's* *Edits 101* series is released this autumn on Orthing Musik. Mathieu's Website:

[www.bitstream.de](http://www.bitstream.de)

## Bitstream

Up from the underground: After the insidiously *Anti An Introduction To The Velvet Underground*, the suits at Polydon/Universal have actually come up with the goods in October they will release the three CD set, *The Velvet Underground Bootleg Series Volume 2: The Quilted Tapes*, a collection of live material recorded by future Vedood Robert Quine in 1969 which includes [count 'em] three versions of "Sister Ray". Perhaps surprisingly, the megacompilation isn't behind the rather less enticing four CD box set of live recordings from 1971-73 which has surfaced from Jason, the Velvet Underground — *Rival View*, documenting the Squeeze-era, post-Lou Yu with *Drag Yule* at its helm. >>> On the *Slutrock* it looks as though the long, long-awaited CD releases of **23 Skidoo's** back catalogue are now finally about to emerge. Their albums *Seven Songs* (1982) and *Urban Gamelan* (1984) are scheduled for October release on the group's Rotten label, with 1983's *The Crying* and a compilation,

*The Gospel Comes To New Guinea*, in January 2002. For details, go to [www.23skidoo.co](http://www.23skidoo.co) >>> From January to April 2002, Pan's Pongusiduo Centre will host **Seeds Process**, an exhibition of 11 multimedia installations by a variety of electronics types working with visual artists. The show will include work from Coldcut, Mike Kelley & Scanner, Flow Motion by someone Vice contributor Kichu Edna, David She, Gabriel Orozco with Richard Dorrissier and Rupert Barber, Doug Aiken, Marty Guse, Art Jones, John Grimsop, Mathieu Brand and Rainer Green >>> Add N To (X)'s **Barry** 7 has unearthed more nuggets from the dusty shelves of Pan's music libraries. Following the success of *Luke Vibert's Nuggets*, *Lo Recordings* will release *Barry 7's* *Connectors*, a miscellany of quality early electro futurism, including tracks from Nuno Nardin, Georges Teperino, Dots Keys, Sven Ulszok and The Juhannu Group >>> **Colony's** *Standard* label has recently released one of the few new DVD Audio discs to take advantage of the new format. Attention includes specially commissioned work specifically designed for the surround sound provided for *Drag Yule* from *Pauline Ovens*, *Merch* *Moss*, *Ngina* *Marshall*. Phil

Kine, Pamela 2, Bruce Odland and others. Point your browser to [www.starkind.com](http://www.starkind.com) for more info >>> In January Channel 4 will be airing another series of **Pioneers**, six 15 minute programmes covering musical mavericks. The next series will feature George Clinton, Steve Reich, the Def Jam label, the Wigan Casino, New Jack Swing founder Teddy Riley and AC/DC >>> Virgin is set to release *Conform To Defcon*, a three CD box set of rare, live and previously unissued Cabaret Voltaire material from their shirts at Virgin and Some Beams compiled by Richard H Kirk. The box set will be accompanied by a single CD greatest hits package >>> Promiscuous turntablists: The UK's premier DJ crew **The Scratch Perverts** have once again welcomed Plus One back into the fold. He will join Jay Vegas and Prima Cuts on the crew's forthcoming debut album >>> Promiscuous indie gababout: The peripatetic **Ben O'Hara** will release an album, *My happy*, and *My Sings And A* 1, 2, 3, 4, on Vienna's Map label in October. The grooves also has it that O'Hara will be releasing an album for Drag City sometime before the year is over.

THE TRAILER







# Global Ear: Johannesburg

**A survey of sounds from around the planet. This month: Charles Leonard discovers a caucous of dissident Afrikaners in a former heartland of South Africa's police state**

Not far from the Abela Sanction, a club situated on a prominent street corner in the Johannesburg suburb of Brixton, a graffiti artist has altered all the red Stop signs by stenciling the words "being afraid" underneath. As one of a network of underground Afrikaners musicians who frequent the place puts it, the Sanction is "a dive, but an honest one". Pushing open its red painted doors, the first thing you notice is a massive poster of Che Guevara watching over a bar stocked with cheap Namibian beer. Young Afrikaners bohemians are draped over worn couches, others sit at cheap tables drinking. Among other things, the Sanction is also home to the Female Headshaving Association, with numerous posters urging women to "sacrifice your locks", but tonight they're nowhere to be seen. Instead, the pub is hosting one of its Monday Night Blues, a popular open mic evening which has been running for the past year, serving a small community of Rastafarian students and white B-boys, as well as providing a platform for the Afrikaners underground that thrives here. On stage is a young "Kalahari Surfer" calling himself Piet Plante ("Pete Plants"). Irony and cynicism are normally as thick as Piet's accent at any gathering of the Afrikaners underground, but he charms and disarms the crowd of city slickers with his acoustic set about life in rural South Africa.

"Play something in English!" someone shouts as a trio, Brixton Moor & Roof (Brixton Murder & Robbery), take to the rocky stage. Their lead singer, Andries Bezuidenhout, smiles and responds: "Go back to Natal", referring to South Africa's most English province. When they're on form, BM&R's music reminds you of US outback rockers Giant Sand. Apart from their ironic name, it's their lyrics (dark histories of drugs and emigrating friends) that are most interesting, as with most of the musicians in this loose network. The names these young Afrikaners choose select for themselves often derive from the taunts used against them, just as "insults" such as "nigger" and "queer" have also been resuscitated: Spinnekop (Spider, short for rockspider – a less than flattering term for Afrikaners), Plank (ditto) and Duusman (sarcastic version of "honky"). There's often less of a gap between Afrikaners and young blacks than between the Afrikaners and their English-speaking counterparts – in fact, it's usually the latter who make the derogatory remarks.

Brixton has always been a strange borough: a former lower middle class/working class suburb where several

police units were based, including the head office of the notorious Brixton Murder and Robbery Unit. Many anti-apartheid activists suffered. Some even died under the Nationalist regime's brutal interrogation methods. But in the mid-80s, a number of white left wingers and a smattering of their black comrades started moving into Brixton and even organising street committees affiliated to the United Democratic Front, the ANC's predecessor in South Africa. Most of these radical whites were Afrikaners. The cops tolerated it, being suddenly able to spy much more easily on their enemy. At about the same time, a bunch of brave young musicians started performing cabaret shows which viciously attacked the repressive PW Botha regime – in Afrikaners, which compounded their transgression. The prime stirrer was journalist Ralph Rabie, who took on the stage name Johannes Kerkerel (John Churchorgan) – satirising the Afrikaner's immense respect for anything linked to the church. But, as Rabie put it, "The shit came raining down when we plugged in the first electric guitar."

Forming a rock group called The Gereformeerde Blues Band ("Reformed", as in the name of the biggest Afrikaners church), they kickstarted the first Afrikaner punk movement, attracting the police's notorious Security Branch to their concerts. The Branch members stood out in the crowds with their macho moustaches and grey shoes, casting an intimidating influence on the young audiences and performers, often slashing car tyres outside.

Their reaction may have seemed similar to killing a mosquito with a Scud missile, but Kerkerel and his mates' activities were dangerous in the eyes of their elders: they were liberating Afrikaners from its nationalist apartheid shackles. It is impossible to estimate, but this "Alternative Afrikaners Movement", as it was dubbed in the media, certainly contributed to the downfall of the Nationalists, if only by raising the consciousness of many young Afrikaners. A decade and a half later, South Africa is (to underestimate widely) a different country: a democracy run by a black ANC government where Afrikaners has none of the special privileges it enjoyed under apartheid.

Back at the Abela Sanction, pangenre artist Riku Latzi is telling the audience it's "fucking difficult to rap in Afrikaners". He's brought out his own double CD 'N Plaster Vir My Nieve (A Plaster for My Wounds)', featuring bold USSR-style socialist realist artwork. "I'm singing in Afrikaners," Latzi says, "because it's

another extension of my music. I don't see the need to stand up for Afrikaners, though – it's become destigmatised." More of a studio musician than a live performer, Latzi's second disc contains minimalist electronica, featuring one rhythmic track using his toothbrush as the main instrument. He's collaborating with Jean Marais, Duusman's singer and sax player, on a new electronic project. The five-piece Duusman – a mix of 23 Skidoo, TFFers Tortoise, Rakshweed, Sint, Elliott Smith, Frank Zappa, Ethiopian soul and South African jazz – are based in Pretoria but often play in Johannesburg, where audiences have frequently been left stunned by their music.

Marais says he makes music simply because "it should be in Afrikaners, and isn't there". For him Afrikaners is a tool, and "it's a nice percussive language". He was the prime mover behind a beautiful new disc, Mondmusiek (Mouth Music), which features former guerilla fighter and Afrikaners artist Breyten Breytenbach reading his poetry over an 'African electronic' accompaniment – Afro-jazz colliding with Chicago-style post-rock.

Another prominent collaborator on Mondmusiek is Paul Rieker, the brains behind hard Techno/Industrial/HipHop outfit Battery 9. "I don't think I'm an Afrikaner," asserts Rieker. "I happen to speak Afrikaners: I love the language but not the culture. Afrikaners is harsh and abrasive – it suits our heavy, clanging, industrial music quite well. Maybe this interest in noise is an Afrikaners thing." On tracks like "Blamee" ("Blame") and "Kakstraat" ("Shit Street") from Battery 9's new album, Sondebok (Scapegoat), both of which he describes as a "carnivalisation of violence", Rieker uses Afrikaners deftly in a vivid cartoon style, yet with a sensitivity to the language's many idiosyncrasies. On "Kan Jy My Se?" ("Can You Tell Me?") and "Jy Wag My" ("You Disgust Me") you don't need to understand the language to feel Rieker's dark voice being drowned in noise, paranoia and alienation. He gives voice to a frustration common among fellow young Afrikaners: "My generation were the lads of apartheid," he complains, "but now that we're grown up there's no lap to sit in. It's frustrating still being sometimes branded the oppressor because of that, while you're nowhere, socially or politically." Information on the artists mentioned above can be found at the following Websites: [www.battery9.co.za](http://www.battery9.co.za), [www.riku.co.za](http://www.riku.co.za), [www.go.to/duusman](http://www.go.to/duusman), and [www.humanousseu.com](http://www.humanousseu.com)

The naked truth: Battery 9's Paul Rieker







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# Invisible Jukebox

Every month we play a musician a series of records which they're asked to identify and comment on – with no prior knowledge of what they're about to hear



## Mike Patton

Tested by Peter Shapiro



Vocalist Michael Allan Patton was born on 27 January 1968 in the logging town of Eureka, California. While still in high school in 1985 he founded the schizophrenic Death Metal group Mr Bungle with bassist Trevor Dunn, guitarist Trey Spruance and drummer Jed Watts. Taking their name from an obscure character from *The Pee Wee Herman Show* (or from porn flick *Sharon's Sex Party*, depending on who you believe), the group recorded several demos, including the legendary *Bowel Of Chiley*, which mixed lo-fi, speed limit Metal with swing horns, ska rhythms and kazooks. In 1988 Patton was hired by stadium Metal group Faith No More to replace departed singer Chuck Mosley. With Patton at the helm, the group recorded two sprawling, platinum albums of eclectic Metal and splatterfunk and two less fractured, less bruising records.

Patton never gave up on Mr Bungle, though, and their self-titled debut album was released in 1991 with production by John Zorn. 1995's *Disco Volante*, however, was the group's masterpiece, taking Prog rock down to Buenos Aires to tango with punk funk and pure noise. He has also released two solo albums on Zorn's Tzadik label – *Adult Themes For Voice*, using only his voice and a microphone, and *Pranzo Oltanzista*, a composition inspired by the Futurists. In the past few years his own Ipecac label has released albums by Maldoror (Patton & Merzbow), Kid606, Sensational and Melvins. He is involved in an astonishing array of side projects, including Peeping Tom (produced by Dan The Automator), Tomahawk (with members of The Jesus Lizard, Melvins and Helmet), two collaborations with laptop improviser Bob Ostertag, and guest vocal appearances with Sparks, Sepultura and Melt-Banana. The Jukebox took place at London's Astoria venue while Patton was on tour with his current group Fantomas, whose collection of movie themes, *The Director's Cut*, has just been released on Ipecac.

## SLAYER "PIECE BY PIECE"

FROM *REIGN IN BLOOD* (DEF AMERICAN 1984)

[Immediately] What, are you kidding me? [laughs] Jesus Christ, I grew up with this stuff. I used to play air drums to this. [former Slayer and current Fantomas drummer] Dave [Lombardo] can't believe that we all worshipped Slayer as much as we did. When I met him he was such a nice guy and I was like, 'Is this a put on? You're from Slayer?' I worked up a Slayer medley – maybe we'll play it tonight – it's nine tunes from this record in about a minute and a half. If you grow up in a small town in the US you're doomed. You either listen to Country or Death Metal. Death Metal is certifiable folk music. Is it like that here? Heavy Metal's huge here, isn't it?

I think it's more of a rural/suburban thing here. It's pretty big in Wales and the Midlands.

We'll be there tomorrow [laughs].

Where are you playing, Newport?

Oh, yeah.

The UK's rock capital.

They'll love us [laughs].

When did you move from this sort of stuff to more experimental things?

One of the first bands I played in was Mr Bungle and this was our Bible. This really is the limit. I don't think there's another record in this genre that can compare to it. That's it, dead end. When you get to a dead end, you got to debut. You can go left or you can go right. We did. Even when we were a Death Metal band, it wasn't really that typical [laughing]. I'm not sure why, but I've never really done anything that I thought was pure or straight. It's always been some weird hybrid and over the years I've gotten more and more comfortable with it. I've tried to hide it at certain times or turn it into something that it wasn't and now I just let it be what it is. The reason behind it I don't know.

Were you listening to other stuff as well?

Sure, sure. I went through some real weird consumer-style phases. Death Metal, just listen to tons of Death Metal, then listen to Windham Hill, aargh, enough of that. Then, whatever, disco, weird soul music. At the end of the day, style is basically some sort of paraphrase of all the things you're into and then over the years, hopefully, your own voice. Hopefully, I'm not paraphrasing too much. I don't trust anyone other than myself. I've been playing with this guy, he's literally one of the first people I've ever met who just doesn't get it [ie Slayer's music]. I just sat him down one day and said, 'Look, we gotta have a talk...' [laughs]

## ELECTRIC COMPANY "KIDBLESSERFROMELECTRICCOMPANY"

FROM *10.15* (TIGERBEAR 2001)

[Sarcastically] IDM [laughs]. Oh shit. Hmm, hrm, hrm. It's not the Kid [806], perhaps?

He's on it.

Then it must be one of the bands he signed [to his Tigerbeat6 label], because he's like that. So, that would be either Blectum From Blectchom...

No, but they're on it too.

OK, I'm just going to go down the line. Cex? Electric Company?

Yes, in an "impromptu live direct to hard disk improvisation", it says here, with Kid606, Lesser and Blectum From Blectchom.

Dr. Lesser, yeah, yeah. He's a funny guy. He's a rock guy. The Electric Company, it's just one guy [Brid Laner]. He's a nerdy sorta fella. I saw a show where he had a bunch of the Tigerbeat bands on one bill. He really stuck out – his shirt was really undecentable, that appealed to me. What's his story? I mean he's a rock guy [formerly of Medicine].

Well, Lesser was a rock guy, too.

Yeah, yeah, Lesser's good, a smart guy. That record's good, man, Gearhead, very good.

How did you come across the Kid?

[Snorts] Funny story. Basically, he was confined to his bedroom in San Diego and he was too young to see, I can't remember which band it was, it might have been Mr Bungle. This kid comes up to me outside the show and says, 'My brother's too young to get into the show, but he really wanted me to give you this CD.' It was one of his Vinyl Communication ones, Don't Sweat The Technics, and I was just laughing at the cover. So I was like, 'I've got to listen to this, put this in the good queue.' I've got a whole section of my house devoted to demos and things like that [laughs], so I finally got around to it like a year later, something embarrassing like that. I listened to it, and it just flipped.

It turned out that the Kid had split from the label, but the guy from VC is like a plumber in San Diego who runs a record label in his spare time – much respect, his head is in the right place. He was like, 'I'm sure he'd love to do a record with you.' He put me in contact, blah blah blah, and we did it.

He's a piece of work, the Kid [laughs]. I did [shout] with him and wow! He's a kid. Putting together his record [2000's *Down With The Scene*] was quite an experience. I don't think he ever put together a full length before. Don't Sweat The Technics is kind of more like a comp. I just expected, like any other artist, he'd just hand in the record and I'd say yes or nay and that would be that. This guy [laughs] hands me his whole library, every fucking note he's written since he decided he was a musician. 12 CDs, 13 CD Rs, fuck what you like. It was like, 'Are you fucking crazy? Like I don't have anything else to do'. But it ended up being really fun because I got to pick and choose the coolest stuff and put together a really good overview of what he's about. It was fun, I really got into it after a while.

Now I'm trying to eke another record out of him, fucking guy. He's too busy playing raves around the world and doing interviews – fucker. The guy gets too much press. Get into the studio. He's good, he's made our label in danger of becoming hip [laughs].

## NEW KINGDOM "SUSPENDED IN AIR"

FROM *POISONOUS DON'T COME CHEAP* (GEE STREET 1996)

Funny, it sounds like something [Techno Animal's] Justin [Broscious] and Kevin [Martin] would do. This isn't too is it? Dislek?

No, it's earlier than that.

Oh. That voice should be telling me something but it's not, UNKLE!

New Kingdom.

Don't know 'em, not at all.

They've done stuff on Wordsound and have some connections to rapper Sensational, who you recently signed to Ipecac.

Ahhh, OK. It had a bit of a Wordsound vibe. It's all right. Yeah, Skiz [Fernando] and those guys. Spectre too, it's got a bit of that too. Sensational, Jesus, that was a real fake. Heard the record, the Kid may have played it to me. It was one of those things again that you just stumble upon. It was just like, yeah, who, I had never heard a take on HipHop quite like that. [Sensational] seems like the great untouchable in HipHop, and we're now finding that out [laughs wryly]. More on that later. He's the real deal, he's an absolute lunatic, there's no posturing there. It's about money, chicks and music for him. Music's probably third on the list, but hey [laughs].

The guy's fucking great, he does it all himself. It's recorded so rawly, it's so hands on, four-track shit, he does it in his bedroom. Especially now that HipHop is



## Invisible Jukebox

all about production and getting the right name guest involved. It's just a big incest plot, using the same people and that's why it sounds the same and that's why it's terrible. 98 per cent throwaway. How can you not appreciate an approach like that?

### Were you listening to HipHop back in the Death Metal days?

Sure, sure, sure. You had to. It was really similar, especially early Public Enemy, but even some of the early [Run] DMX, even Sugar Hill. I worked in a record store, and that was how I discovered a lot of the shit that I was into. Basically being a delinquent working in a record store, opening and listening to everything and stealing even more. Working in a record store and having my boss were probably the two coolest things that happened to me as a teenager [laughs]. Man, my ears shut down after that Son Of Bazooka record [Bazooka Bazooka, released in 1991 by a former producer of Flavor Flav]. I think that was one of the last great ones. I don't know, to me that kind of ended an era. I don't know why, but I got saturated, my ears shut down. I said 'uncle' and gave up for a while.

The DJ scene in San Francisco, the Wordsound label and people coming from the scene of HipHop got me back into it. I don't know if it was for a little while or if my ears died, but I just couldn't deal with it anymore. It's a dead end genre just like Death Metal: until it starts making burns, it's great for a journey. I think what really got me back into it was the terrible thing and watching cats in San Francisco do this stuff that had nothing to do with dance music. That opened my eyes again, and I started trusting MCs again [laughs]. And then starting to play with some of those guys and realising that, wow, this is an instrument and these guys are musicians and they're listening and they're curious, curious as anyone. They're just as bored as some idiot with a guitar in his bedroom.

**Is Fantomias and Mr Bungle's cut-up approach derived from HipHop, or is it more from a Zorn angle?**  
Probably some of it's from HipHop, but Zorn really twisted my head a few times and by the time I stopped spinning I had a pretty good idea of what I wanted to do. We were just really good friends and hung out and exposed each other to a lot of really crazy stuff. That's what's it's about for musicians: helping each other. There's a few of us out there who really give a shit, and it's our job to poke people in the eye and make people think. He's one of the greats at that. Cut-up stuff is something I've tried and gotten a little better at over the years, but it's not appropriate for every project. But turntables and playing with DJs is the best weapon for cut-up music. You can have any sound at your fingertips: boom, drop a needle...

In the last four or five years, I've been working with a lot of DJs, sometimes weird improv shows, sometimes recording projects, sometimes sound effects, playing with The Xcutters. We're going to do a record, that's a blast. That's more from a HipHop angle, but there's a void in that music probably from derelict more than anything else. It's not dense enough and so we're gonna make a dense and nasty record. Fun.

## MASSIVE ATTACK

### 'ANY LOVE' (LARRY HEARD MIX)

FROM MASSIVE ATTACK EP [CIRCA 1992]

[The track is in real schmalzy Deep House mode] My ya ya! Stop the press.

**This is chosen mostly because of the people involved.**  
I hope. Yikes.

**This isn't what you'd expect from them. It's a remix of an early record.**

This isn't one of those early Ministry records, is it [laughs]? I've never heard them, but they're legendary for what bad disco they are. Or it could be Sparks.

**It's someone you're going to be working with soon.**  
God, I better rethink it. Could it be one of the Massive guys? OK. This is an early Massive record? Damn. I'm glad I missed that period [laughs]. Which one is that, so I know which one not to buy. [Looks at the sleeve] This isn't that old, is it?

**It originally came out in 1988, but this is a remix.**

Oh, OK, it was nowhere near being able to listen to Massive Attack in 1988. 'Hymn Of The Big Wheel' I know, that's great. Who the fuck is Paul Oakenfold [who remixed a track on the EP]?

**The less said the better.**

All right, I thought so, but I just wanted to ask [laughs]. He's making 50 grand a show on this Moby tour. Fantomas got offered to do it. I know, I know, I wanted to do it really bad, but they wouldn't pay us a measly five grand. Do you believe that shit? I was into the freak factor of it. Paul Oakenfold - he's getting 50 grand a show! For pushing a few buttons on a DAT machine! What is the fucking word coming to?

**How did your project with Massive's Robert Del Naja, aka 3D, and Young Gods' Franz Treichler come about?**

Well, I hope. Franz works on another plane in terms of intensity. He's very slow. I hope I can throw that project together with Franz, because he's got a great take on that whole electronic thing and I love his voice. Young Gods still have something really special. I wanted to do an electronic trio with three writers and three singers, and I didn't want us all to live in the same city. I wanted it to be sort of a mail order project because, to be honest, I've got lots of bands that live right in my backyard and I didn't need any more right now. I wanted something to have a slow incubation.

**You've talked about liking The Young Gods because they were a guitar band without any guitarists. Was it the process that attracted you?**

Well, the sound interested me at first, then when I found out how it was done it became even more... like the illusion being cooler than the reality. If a band went up there and did that, I don't know how special it would be. It wouldn't be as good, you know why? Because when you hit a key on a sampler and it's coming out of a stereo and going directly into a PA, nothing can be that pristine, that digital, that full of a spectrum. On a guitar, you've got a mic and a guitar cabinet, it can't have the same impact. That's what struck me the first time I saw them: 'My God, this is just too good. It's impossible.' Again, it's the illusion.

## JOHN COLTRANE

### 'ASCENSION - EDITION I'

FROM ASCENSION [IMPULSE] 1965

Here we go. Whole lotta horn. Art Ensemble?

No.

Double quartet. Ornette? No, too many people. The trumpet's loud so it must be a trumpet player.

**Afraid not.**

One more guess, Coltrane. Ascension, yep. Figured it had to be with that many people. Jesus Christ, war zone [laughs]. Did you ever hear that Song X [a 1987 free jazz cut between Ornette Coleman and Pat Metheny]? Man, I just went back and listened to it. It's fucking great. Best thing Pat Metheny ever did, must have been a wet dream for him. It's fucking amazing. Zorn did a great Ornette record, *Say Vs Say*. I chose some 'out' jazz because you've said something about loving jazzers going hardcore. Is it the jazz part or the hardcore part?

I think it's probably the war zone approach. I didn't grow up with jazz. I can't claim a deep knowledge about it. I learned about it way after the fact. The thing that made the most sense to my ears when I was discovering it was the free expression. Then I realised that you can do that with any kind of music. The

hardest part is growing the bells big enough to try it because, aargghh, I don't think there's anything on the face of the planet worse than bad improv.

I don't listen to a lot of those records anymore. It's something that makes sense live, when you're watching it happen. For instance, I've tried to record improv shows of mine. Zorn tried forever to make a record of the trio we had with Iktu Mon. I don't know how many recordings we had but every time you'd listen to it, it doesn't move air, doesn't hold water. We came to the conclusion that that's what it was meant for and let's leave it at that.

The luckiest I got with that was the record I did with Merzbow, Malsorum, where we went into the studio and improvised and I took it home, dictated it up and added special sauce. You had the spirit of it, but I was able to, well, tame it when it needed to be. It's about listening and communicating with whoever you're on stage with, and that's why I don't like to play solo. I never have, I hope I never have to. If you can be on stage and speak another language that other people don't understand, that's amazing, sometimes telepathic shit happens. I love improvising like that. [With] Merzbow, we can barely speak three words of the same language, but we get up there and it works, [that's] really fun, great. It makes you feel invincible. You're talking to this person and the words are getting tangled up and it starts and ends at the same time. It's a great thing, it happens very rarely. It's troublesome and it's dangerous, it takes balls, it's a great challenge and I think everybody should try it. If you're a musician, you really owe it to yourself. The audience may not agree...

## BOREDOMS

### 'I AM COLA'

FROM POP DAZARI [NINE JAPAN] 1992

[As soon as Yamatsuka Eye starts screaming] Very good. I had a feeling, but that sealed the deal. Gotta love 'em. Which one is this?

**Pop Tem.**

OK. A good one. Was it before or after Chocolate Synthesizer [1994]? I really like Chocolate Synthesizer. Haven't seen them in a while. Last time they were doing a drum circle thing which didn't thrill me to tears. It was good, but it was like a hardcore tantra approach, two drummers. I was, 'I think you guys have been smoking a little too much weed.' They've got dreadlocks now. They're still great. They put out a lot of records, maybe too many, but they're amazing.

**Was that another Zorn thing or were you aware of them before?**

Yeah, I had Soul Discharge [1989]. Zorn told me he was friends with them, and introduced me to them, and now we're flirting about doing different projects together. I'm finally going to do something with Eye and Yoshimi and the Two Woen guys, which should be interesting. They did this one record that's really hard to find, *Z-Rock Hawaii*. When sent it to me, Fuckin' A, it's really good, so I pushed them a little further and said, 'You can do a little better', let's do it.

**There's a similarity between you guys...**

Yeah, voice approach, probably number one. Concept of 'song' versus piece of music. The whole 'this is not rock', we're not a rock band' approach, but using all those clichés and things. I mean, Christ, almost, rock music still consists of the same formula that Chuck Berry started? Verse-chorus-bridge-verse-chorus-outro. Give me a break, please. So anyone who strays from that path, you've got to blink an eye at it. It's just amazing that anything that strays from that path is thought of as weird or novelty. Jesus, if that's true, then my whole fucking life is a novelty project, so Fantomas 'The Director's Cut' is out now on Jpecac



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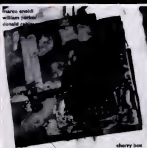
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Blurring the boundaries between the avant garde and the pop scrapheap, *Stereolab's* Messiaenic missionaries, Tim Gane and Laetitia Sadier, have dusted off their most streamlined sound to date

Words: John Mulvey

# GOING POTTY FOR A LIVING

It's like being in the middle of Florida, according to Tim Gane, and hearing myriad insect noises simultaneously. The sheer density of sound, the overloaded rhythmic textures – the massed noise of cicadas resembles, to him, a kind of orchestration. "I love that," he says, "I find that being alive, that kind of sound."

This entymological chorus, in part, is the inspiration behind *Sound-Dust*, the latest chapter in Stereolab's imaginative mission to combine pop and avant garde influences, to blur the boundaries between 'high' and 'low' culture to a point where they're relevant only to critics. Their 13th album (including three compilations and two mini-albums), it marks something of a break from the group's perceived style. However diverse their influences in the past (motorik, systems music, space age Easy Listening, tropicalia, free jazz, French chanson, avant electronics, et al), much of Stereolab's output can be identified by the saturated drone of analogue keyboards. That trademark is largely absent from *Sound-Dust*, though the reasons for its removal are, as Gane concedes, "labyrinthine".

"On the last LP [1999's *Cobra And Phases Group Play Kottage In The Milky Night*], I wrote the rhythms first. I wanted to see how they would affect the harmonic content of the music. On this one, I wanted the drums to be totally static, polyrhythmic in the sense of Messiaen's *Turangila* Symphony. In the end that didn't really happen, but the first piece of music that you hear on the record [*"Bleek Ants In Sound-Dust"*] was written at that stage: it's really simple, obvious, six little instruments. Then I had to think about how the rest of the music would work with the rhythms being like that, fast but static, so I thought of making pools of music where there was no obvious rhythm, just lying there."

The end result of all this is a record that eliminates many of the more obtrusive sounds used extensively by the group in the past – the thickets of organ hum, abstract electronics and strummed guitars – and replaces them with pianos and celestes. If the impetus for change was rhythmic, it's in the instrumentation and arrangements where the shift has had most impact. They haven't sounded this lean and

graceful since their benchmark 1996 release, *Emperor Tomato Ketchup*.

Gane and singer Laetitia Sadier have driven Stereolab forward for a decade now, and the enduring mistrust of the mainstream (who find them too leftfield) and the leftfield (who find them too mainstream) has made them wary of reductive classification. Every time you venture a description – that *Sound-Dust* is a more organic record, say, one that eludes the usual tag of retro-futurism – it's met with something akin to a polite shudder. Still, Gane admits that cosmetic changes have been made to avoid the stereotypes this time: the song titles are shorter; the cover art posches its imagery from the poster to Roman Polanski's *Cul De Sac* rather than referencing vintage sci-fi.

"I think it's easier to be a new band, take a few hip references and put them together," he says. "You can string that out for an album or two. But every album, every year makes it more difficult to not repeat what you've done, and to not repeat what people are doing around you. If you have the mettle to continue, that's



where it really shows." Stereolab's method has been to draw inspiration from disparate musics (Sound-Dust's title, incidentally, derives from a writer who described part of Messiaen's music as "poussière sonore") and rethink them, using influences interpretively rather than dogmatically. It's the same with Sadler's impressionistic, philosophically inclined lyrics often lazily dismissed as – another Stereolab cliché, this – Marxist cant.

"This guy in Italy was telling me off because he couldn't understand my lyrics," she says. "I said, 'Do you want me to understand them for you, then?' Maybe I write them in a certain way that I don't want them to be understood with just one meaning."

"I think ambiguity's one of the great things about music," adds Kane, "that's the space that allows your imagination to work."

Sadler continues the thread: "That's the creative side of listening, where you have to fill in the space, where you have to be active and be creative."

It's this faith in open-endedness – something they share with Sound-Dust's producers, Jim O'Rourke and

John McIntire – which defines Stereolab. Not that they'd approve of being defined in any way, of course. "Great music, I think," says Kane, "is a mixture of the act of doing it and the intellect behind it. I don't know why people shy away from that."

Stereolab have often pursued a fusion of concept and instinct by employing musicians with no training in the instrument they're assigned. It's been an effective ploy: complex music rendered by anti-musos, theory transformed by the DIY aesthetic. But as their music becomes more arranged, the live unit's newest recruit Dominic Jeffery is, of necessity, an accomplished keyboardist.

Then there's the humour. Kane protests that few people ever notice this, and he has a point. The new album's "Nothing To Do With Me", a balmy duet between Sadler and Mary Hansen, initially appears to be about Kane and Sadler's parallel life as parents. In fact, it's a transcription of a Chris Morris sketch from *Jam*, satirising paranoid rushes to the doctor and peppered with references to coffins for babies.

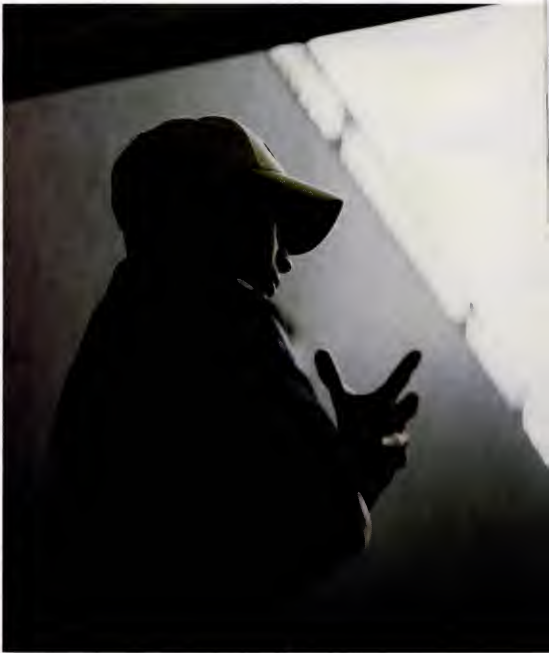
"People, I think, can't take responsibility," says Sadler, "that's why they always go to the doctor. It's a basic thing, like potty training. You should learn to be responsible for yourself. All the media works against that, which is why Chris Morris can walk in and walk over it all."

Sadler has an unfashionably high opinion of human potential. It transpires. Much of *Cobra And Phases* was preoccupied with the idea of creation: "The creative power of humans is extraordinary and completely overlooked. Now we just look at ourselves as losers, useless losers who pollute the earth."

It's idealism, then, that motivates Stereolab, not the rigid doctrines and formulae ascribed them by their detractors. "Basically," says Kane, "you're trying to move forward all the time. You have to admit you have a certain limited number of themes and ideas that you really love or are involved in. But you try to move them into areas where they weren't previously, to see what'll happen. . . In the end, it's an exploration of ideas of what is possible." (Sound-Dust is out now on Duophonic)









# DRILLER FILLER

You're universally acclaimed as the greatest DJ to ever violate a Vestax and strain a Stanton — so good, in fact, that you've been banned from competing because you're just too damned intimidating. Your bottle breaks records are used by every DJ who's followed in your wake, and you've worked with everyone from DJ Shadow to Bill Laswell to Kool Keith. What do you for an encore? If you're Richard Queivis, better known as former Invisibl Skratch Piklz DJ Q-Bert, you make a movie. Not just any movie, of course, but a \$250,000 animated fantasia about dentists rescuing HipHop from inner space. Called *Wave Twisters*, it is described in the press pack as "HipHop meets Hanna-Barbera" — although "Ralph Bakshi making HipHop instead of Heavy Metal (minus his fixation with big-breasted blondes)" or "Space Ghost on the A-Train" would be more appropriate. Whatever, *Wave Twisters* is destined to be *The Wolf* for the next generation of high school burnouts uninterested in guitars, narrative cohesion or an alienated rock star's hallucinations.

*Wave Twisters* premiered earlier this year at the Sundance film festival and has just been released on video in the UK. Yet the "soundtrack" album of the same title was released way back in 1998. "I've been working on *Wave Twisters* since '98, since the album was done," Q-Bert says, fighting back both work fatigue and jetlag in his London hotel room. "When 90 per cent of the album was done we started working on the first video. We wanted to make the whole album a concept type movie, animated with psychedelic type stuff in it, a graffiti animated movie. We found out it would be the first ever animated HipHop movie, and we were like, 'Ahh, that's cool.'"

Half anime-style, half graffiti come to life, the animation is synced to Q-Bert's meningococcal woodpecker sneeze scratching, flashing out a previously semi-articulated parallel universe comprised of "octopus people", "galactic butt hair", "reverse cat breath" and "demolition pumpkin squeeze musik". "The soft, comic book thing is one aspect of the imaginary otherworldly sounds that come from the turntables because it's its own type of music, it's not really considered jazz or rock or whatever," explains Q-Bert. "It comes from HipHop, but it's not necessarily HipHop either. Basically, if you're scratching you could be scratching anything, it doesn't have to be HipHop. But to me HipHop is an experimental music anyway... I grew up buying comics — *Yoga Frog*, my business partner, worked in a comic book shop. We collect a lot of comic books...." At this point, the phone rings. Q-Bert answers it like an old Chinese guy who doesn't speak good English, goofing on the guy scheduled to do the next interview, before continuing, his stream of thought unbroken. "Comic books and all the stories, the imagination and pictures played a pretty big role in my life. Cartoons too. I guess it's the child at heart type thing.... I guess because of the kind of imagination we grow up with, that reflects itself in the music. When we think of scratching and weird sounds, I guess the first thing that comes to mind is weird characters."

The job of materialising Q-Bert's deranged Marvel fantasy world fell to Doug Cunningham, aka graffiti writer Dug1, who has previously illustrated many of the Skratch Piklz records. But before he became a superhero turntablist, Q-Bert, too, was a mild mannered graffiti tagger trying to make his dream world come alive on the walls of Old City and San Francisco. "Not really graffiti," Q-Bert corrects. "I was more like a vandal. I used to just write my name on walls really badly. That's my experience with that. Of course, through doing that you get to meet a lot of artists and get to see a lot of artwork around the city and that really helped the aspect of the graffiti world in my HipHop knowledge. That's how I met Doug. We were just roaming the city and we saw him painting on the wall, he was betting this other guy. I was just like,

'Damn, this guy's really good'. There was this really famous graffiti spot in San Francisco called Psycho City and all the artists would go out there and write on the walls and it would change every day, there would be all these pieces. Artists from LA would come down and battle artists from San Francisco, and people from Europe would come and battle. That whole big parking lot was called Psycho City and I found out that Doug was the one who named it Psycho City. It was on Market Street, Market and 13th or something like that. It's gone now, it's all painted over, but for many years that was the place that people would gather if they went into true school HipHop art, whether you were a B-boy or even a DJ you'd go there and play music and drink beers or whatever, watch people battle each other."

Around the time Q-Bert started hanging out at Psycho City, he started on the path to becoming the Hendra of the Technics, becoming a party DJ while future Skratch Piklz (and current Beastie Boys DJ) Mismaster Mike taught him the rudiments of scratching. "I haven't done any party DJing in years," laughs Q-Bert. "I love doing that, it's fun, but right now, I guess it's like a blessing in disguise. I was in a car accident and I can't walk too far, so I can't really carry a lot of records like a party DJ would. So I guess it was sort of fate that had me use what little I had, to use as few records as I can, to do as much as I can with what little I have."

According to legend, it was this car accident in 1989 that made him such an outrageous driver on the wheels of steel. Confined to a wheelchair for several months, he spent his convalescence practising on the turntables. "I guess when I first heard someone scratching and started doing it, I automatically fell in love with it," he says. "I used to lose all the competitions. When I started to win a few, and when I finally won the world or the US, or whatever, I was like, 'Maybe I'll try to make this a job or something'. My mom always taught me to try to sell stuff, and it was like, 'If I were a DJ what would I want?' And so we made these ideas for a record, the battle breaks type records where the sounds were one after the other on beat. We started selling those and they just flew out the door. Hey, wow, we could just do this stuff. Making the Demolition Pumpkin Squeeze thing and the practice tapes and then the practice videos, which turned into a video magazine, *Turntable TV*, of course making an album and the movie.... I think it's just endless. There's all types of things that can grow out of it as far as making a life out of it."

In 1992, Q-Bert released *Battle Breaks*, which is generally considered to be the first (and still one of the best) battle breaks record for DJs. The same year he won the DMC DJ Championship as part of The West Coast Rock Steady DJs with Mismaster Mike and DJ Apollo. He won it again the following years as part of the Dream Team, again with Mike. Then in 1994 Q-Bert released what may be his masterpiece, *Demolition Pumpkin Squeeze Musik*, on which, with some help from fellow Skratch Piklz Shortkut and DJ Disk, he unleashes his untouchable deck skills on HipHop's treasure trove of breaks that are so old Skool, Q-Bert calls them 'pre-skool'. Both mindbending and body-moving, *Demolition Pumpkin Squeeze Musik* is the ultimate DJ document: it would rock any party and satisfy any turntable therapist. "That was definitely a cool time," he says. "I liked to do one thing and then move on to the next, it was like we were actually talking about bringing that old style back.... This person who never heard scratching before went to a battle and a lot of the techniques, a lot of the cool stuff went over her head, but when she heard something familiar she was very excited. I know that song," and the guy's flipping it. It's just like jazz: a lot of it goes over my head, but when I hear something familiar, like Miles Davis will play "Someday My Prince

Applying his quickcutting and crossfader expertise to the world's first animated HipHop film, former Invisibl Skratch Piklz DJ Q-Bert creates a parallel universe, where dentists are the heroes who rescue HipHop from inner space.

Words: Peter Shapiro

Photos: Frank Bauer





"The sci-fi, comic book thing is one aspect of the imaginary otherworldly sounds that come from the turntables, because it's its own type of music"

Will Come" and I'm like, 'Oh, I know that song,' and he's flipping it. So it's like maybe I should use familiar songs that people know and flip those, rather than be in a secluded scratch world where only a scratch artist would understand. But I guess you can be in both worlds, and use your crazy scratch techniques together with that and please both audiences. Just using that familiarity to get your point across."

Pumpkin Squeeze starts off with Q-Bert duetting with guitarist Alex Lifeson as he scratches over Rush's "Tom Sawyer" before quickcutting to Eddie Bo's New Orleans funk classic "Hook & Sling". He proceeds to travel through "Tramp" (Lowell Fulson's version), Banbarra's "Shack Up" and Rhythm Heritage's "Theme from SWAT", transforming them all with the crossfader and peppering them with dozens of snippets of Style Wars and Wildstyle. It was reissued on CD in 1999 by what appeared to be some Japanese HipHop fanatic. "The CD thing," he laughs, before confessing, "we actually put that out with all the Japanese writing on it to make it look like a Japanese import. You're the first person I ever told that to. We might as well let the secret out now... I guess scratching for us is kind of a new thing and I really didn't know my history too well until I met Crazy Legs from New York. He was showing me all these old mixtapes that Grand Wizard Theodore and Grandmaster Flash would make, and they all had those old funk breaks on them. I was like, we could take that style, make a mixtape of all the funky breaks just like they did, and mix it my own way, but add what we know now in the future and put all those little

scratches in there... Me and Mixmaster Mike actually heard the same tape. It was Grand Wizard Theodore playing that Rush thing and we were like, 'That is so cool.' So we took that and did it in our own way. Those days were way ahead of their time."

As Q-Bert and his fellow Scratch Pkiz (at the time, Mixmaster Mike, DJ Apollo, Shortkut and DJ Disk) were becoming celebs on the Bay Area underground circuit, they hooked up with maverick HipHop journalist, broadcaster and entrepreneur Billy Jam in 1995 to produce the Shoggy Fragger Show. That semi-mythical broadcast of fundamentalist scratching, terrible fidelity and schoolboy humour has since been preserved on several CD documents. "Billy Jam had a radio show in San Francisco and it would be an all underground rap show," Q-Bert reminisces. "They'd have really obscure underground HipHop artists come on the show and he'd always swear on the radio. That's why he made the Shoggy Fragger Show, which was totally 'do whatever you want on the radio'. There was a pirate radio station, you could probably only hear it if you were like half a block away, and he got us in there and said, 'Here are some beers, have a couple of smokes and do whatever you want.' So we were just having a good time and being free with it and that was the whole idea of the Shoggy Fragger Show. That went for a couple of years, actually, maybe three, four. It was just the early Invisibl Skratch Pikiz: Disk, Shortkut, myself, Mixmaster Mike, Apollo... MC UB would come on once in a while. Instead of rapping, he would just sing or tell jokes. It

was kind of anti everything, the punk rock of scratching. Play some Metallica and scratch over it, things like that."

In 1997 the Scratch Pkiz pretty much stopped working together, before finally officially breaking up in 2000. "We didn't really break up, it was just that we were so far apart that it was hard to work," Q-Bert declares. "Mixmaster Mike went with The Beastie Boys, so it was hard to work with him because he was in LA and we were in San Francisco. Shortkut has different views on the turntable. His art is more like mixing for people like a party type of style... Apollo and Shortkut and Vin Roc (from The Beat Junkies) have this thing called Triple Threat, they stress the importance of party rocking, which is playing music so the club can dance, but incorporating the scratching and battle things within that... Me and D-Styles look at turntables as closer to a jazz thing where we're trying to push the artform. It's a musical instrument and we're playing it and, of course, from there it's just an infinity of musical progressions, just like the trumpet. I mean, how many styles can you play with the trumpet? Just infinity. Like the piano, same thing."

And, of course, DJ Disk and frequent collaborator guitarist Buckethead are now part of the travelling circus that is Guns 'N Roses. "Buckethead is really against it," claims Q-Bert. "He did it because Axl... Buckethead collects all these weird, uh, I don't know how to describe it, you go into his room and there's all these weird cut-off arms, weird heads in bottles, all





these sorts of things. I think it was the Leatherface doll that Axl bought him for his birthday and he was like, 'Wow, I've been looking all over for this'. Just from that he joined, which was maybe a really bad idea because he could've gotten it real easily from eBay. But on the tour he's been having all these ulcers and throwing up blood. He really hates that whole rock scene where everyone's really uptight and stuck up and doing things for the money. He doesn't like that scene at all. As far as Disk, I don't know because I haven't really talked to him much. Disk is like the 'don't care guy'. Wherever he is, he's just gonna make it his show [laughs]. He'll be with like some cocktail jazz band and just throw on some Metallica, not even scratch over it. Anything that's way off and not supposed to happen. There'll be some classy kind of thing and he'll just come on in a tank top, drink a beer and throw it in the audience, set the turntable on fire [laughs]. The opposite of everything is what Disk is."

While Disk and Master Mike are bringing scratching to the stadiums of the world, and Apollo and Shortkut are bringing it back to the roots, where will turntablism's king of all media head? "Right now, we're working on Wave Twisters Part Two, the 'To be continued...' part," Q-Bert says. "Of course, we could do another movie which would be the logical thing to do, but we wanted to make another concept album, but have the continuation to be in a video game. So all the chapters are a video game type of thing. Microsoft has approached us to do something for the Xbox

[Microsoft's video game platform], so we'll see if that's another blessing in disguise type thing or not."

His recent listening and viewing habits suggest another possible direction. "A lot of what I listen to now is jazz," he declares. "You ever heard of Zakir Hussain? Yeah, I like to listen to tabla and drums. Anything that I don't really understand, I'll listen to and try to understand it, I really like Dave Brubeck, the time signatures and all that, that's really some crazy stuff. I'll try to incorporate some of that style into scratching, you know different movements... Right now I'm studying Picasso. There's a new DVD that just came out, and his progression was just like music. There was just one style, then he went to Cubism, then he got influenced by African art. It doesn't have to be musical to be inspirational. He even said before he died that, even though he invented so many styles of art, art still had yet to be invented. That was very inspirational... The way he went back to African art and looked at the way it was just so raw, and he brought that forward and made it new again, that kind of reminded me to look back at older scratching and how we can bring that style back and mix it with the new... A lot of DJs will want to incorporate, say, the newest mixer with an echo effect on it or something, like a distortion effect or something, or a wah pedal, but if you want to bring it back to primitive style, forget all these new effects and try to emulate them with just being a turntable mixer, treating the echoes by hand or creating the distortion by moving your hand a certain way. Or taking the complex route: like when jazz was

becoming bebop and getting more complicated, and Miles Davis went the opposite direction and played slower and more poetic... This other direction is someone like Kid Koala, who really doesn't know too many techniques, but likes to play really slow or uses weird sounds. There's this one record I picked up the other day by some scratcher guys from out here, I think, and it's just a whole new style. Maybe it was The Scratch Perverts, they don't even use records anymore, they just use feedback."

One thing's for sure, though, he won't be calling whatever he comes up with 'turntablism' or his former preferred term, 'ostrich music'. "We don't call it ostrich music anymore," he declares. "We just call it scratching. People who don't really know too much about the art form call it turntablism, and we stick to what we've always called it, scratching or scratch music."

What does he have against 'turntablism'? "It's like B-boys, they call what they do B-boying or breaking, but the media calls it breakdancing," he answers. "They're totally against that, they hate that. But, of course, you can't really get away from that, people are used to saying that now. It also just sounds really uncomfortable saying 'turntablism'. Turntablism, what the hell is that? Just like that jazz thing. They hate calling it jazz. What do they call it? They just call it black music." □ Wave Twisters is out now on Galactic Butt Harv and ThudRumble video. For more information go to [www.wavetwisters-themovie.com](http://www.wavetwisters-themovie.com) and [www.skratchoon.com](http://www.skratchoon.com)







## alone in the dark

Björk's songs often conjure ethereal landscapes of her native Iceland and the eucalyptus forests of Marshall Is. She tells David Byrne about her new *Vespertine*.

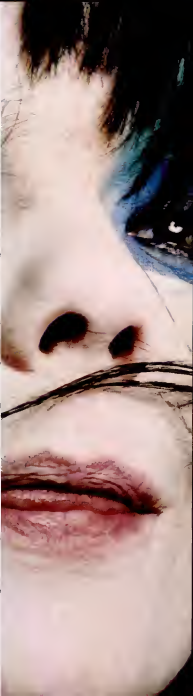
By David Byrne, the joys and perils of collaboration, and how the Internet is creating a more human music. Includes David Sims

Somebody has given me a map. Useful to have a map. A map is good for wilderness. But this is a map of Hafnarfjörður, a town that can boast, and I quote, "one of the richest elf and spirit populations among all towns in Iceland." Four types of gnome and all manner of elves can be seen in Hafnarfjörður, apparently. I stare out of the window of this four-wheel drive, equipped with its own satellite-linked laptop that tracks our progress through the real world, faintly hopeful that Icelandic whimsy may be a double bluff, disguising some deeper belief in small mythical beings.

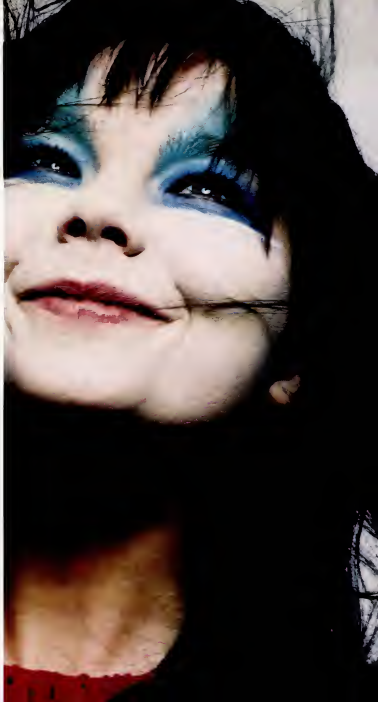
No gnomes for our wild place day trip, but the ground is flecked, now, with globes of snow. Reykjavik was warm enough but the further we go towards Þingvellir, the Viking parliament, the lower the mercury falls. A brief stop, the landscape falling away in rusted folds. Steam seeps out of the earth, drifts eastwards. Another stop. I can't tell you where exactly. A huge white chimney, surface pitted and mottled like the skin of an octogenarian sun worshipper, pukes high pressure steam into the pallid October sky. Soft hummocks of thick moss and lichen bulge like fat green bears, dead or sleeping among the milky, half-frozen pools of mineral rich water that puddle the ground; I bounce over them, feeling low frequency tremors vibrate straight through my shoes to my skull. A roar through rock, a shout of being. Sound hammering nails into cold air. Nature is playing her Carl Michael Von Hausswolff records on a Sunday morning.

My two companions make up the perfect group for sharing a physiological assault of this alien magnitude. Vocalist Joan La Barbara is mentally preparing for her performance later that day, her programme including *Shaman Song* and *In The Dreamtime*. Shamanism may be long gone from here, but we both agree, you still feel it. Rolling Stone writer David Fricke is enjoying the rock 'n' roll blast of it. Last August he had written the sleeve notes for a reissue of Lou Reed's *Metal Machine Music*. "It was every kind of rock," he said, "boiled down to its molten essence." Right this second, we're not dealing in metaphors. A couple of months after our experience at the steam chimney, Fricke contributed an essay for the release of John Cale's *Sun Blindness Music*. "There is, in music, no such thing as a single note," he wrote. "What you hear is not a note but a world of overtones, the transformative collision of accident, purpose and soul."

Five months later, spring sun shining, I'm sitting in Björk's kitchen in London. Wind chimes in the garden add their accidental melodious impact to the









conversation. I ask her, because I can't resist, about these possibly spurious, romantically conceived emanations from Iceland's interior. Something wild and pagan, amnestic, entranced, of avian spirits, ecstasy, beer claws, sun drums and darkness. She thinks a bit. This is one of those questions that... oh no... 21st century, nobody under the age of 50 wants to be mistaken for Carlos Santana.

"I still haven't worked that one out," she says, "being such an atheist all my life. It was something related to this winter world thing, hibernation, crystals and about finding paradise in one snowflake. It's sort of pseudo-religious and seeking salvation. I still haven't worked it out, to be honest, because so many sides of me are very defensive about anything religious, but if there's an album that's got anything about it that's religious, it's this one. Songs about wanting angels to turn up and save you."

In a way, the best moment for your own personal it's A Wonderful Life type salvation is right at the end of a question about apertures. An angel who saves you from drowning, then finds you a place to dry off. Particularly when you are an officially designated elf. Actually, Björk is more punk than elf, though her opinions on any given subject can embrace both extremes. "I guess I feel quite strongly that pagan things don't have to be clumsy or vulgar," she says. "They can be very poetic and delicate, even decadent. A lot of people think that if you have anything to do with pagan nature, it has to be clumsy." She ruminates on a youthful enthusiasm for 18th century Japan, the opposition of samurai and geisha, then jumps to Vikings, reciting poetry while they were chopping people's heads off. "Obviously that was a thousand years ago in Iceland," she says, "not now, but it still interests me."

This brief religious interlude comes at the end of two days of chat between us, only surfacing because of my fantasies about Icelandic landscape and being in close proximity to Iceland's most famous doter. But the image of beheldings accompanied by poetry is somehow apposite, both to Björk and to other members of the Reykjavík cultural community from which she emerged. More of that later. Much of what we have been discussing relates to her new album, *Vespertine*, which she feels has a touch of religion about it.

I don't see it as religion. It's more the feeling of being alone, enveloped in a cocoon of solitude and introspection, and gaining access to deep thoughts, looser feelings, greater awareness. The title itself is a marker of transitional moments, a passing between the day's clarity of light to a different kind of clarity, only revealed through darkness. Not necessarily a soft feeling; there could be angelic choirs if that's part of your psychological profile, but evening is when you might see the owls and bats in flight, setting off on their nocturnal hunt. But it's a paradise, a hidden place that's portable, a resource to draw on during times of chaos and disorientation.

"I think I was playing with that a little bit with this album," she says, "the choirs... to create this kind of utopia. Of course there was a bit of tongue in cheek. For me, being an old punk, it took a lot to swallow that one. Maybe that's partly also a reaction from the film. I think it's maybe where I didn't agree with Lars sometimes. I think it's OK to create gorgeous moments, where there's not a thing out in sight. Because we have moments like that. We do. It doesn't happen all the time, for sure."

Here we seem to have slipped back into a previous conversation, held in the same kitchen last year, shortly before the release of Lars Von Trier's film, *Dancer in the Dark*. The *Vespertine* moments were difficult to summon at that point. Björk's "kooky weirdo" image was confirmed by press reports that she had eaten her blouse, or some similar garment, during

altercations with her Danish director. Personally, I abhor Lars Von Trier's films like *Breaking The Waves* and *The Idiots*. I couldn't quite understand why she had composed a soundtrack, let alone played the starring role, for a musical directed by a man who's apparently content with his own intellectual and emotional dishonesty.

Her view seemed to be that the challenge of working with difficult people is a reward in itself, even if you disagree with them profoundly. "Lars, he's talked a lot in the Danish press about having a chemical imbalance," she said. "He wakes up every day burning in hell. You wake up and you're still there. I was curious at first. I don't think I agree with it at all. What makes me maddest, it's indulging in something. There's too many people suffering in the world. I think there's enough pain there already. It was put there before there was you. I think it's arrogance to think you can control it. I think if I'm in a good balanced state, which I'm not saying I'm in all the time, I can do joy, curiosity, pain, pranks, almost all the things. If I'm burning in hell I can only do one song."

Collaboration is one of the keys to Björk's work, not because she can't function without it, but because her selection of collaborators constantly redefines the image of who she is and what she can achieve. The transformation effected for the cover of *Homogenic*, an Orientalist hybrid of long-necked Burmese Paduang woman, Glon Geisha and princess at the imperial court of the Tang empress Wu Tse-Tien, art directed by Alexander McQueen, styled by Katy England, shot by Nick Knight, underlined the possibilities of temporarily vacating your own skin, pupating an image in the mind of an imaginary dreamer.

The collaborators change: LFO's Mark Bell busy with the heroes of his youth, Depeche Mode; Guy Sigsworth working with Madonna, though as ever, he programs for Björk, co-writes "Crave", "Sun In My Mouth" and "Harm Of Will", arranges, plays celeste and clavichord. Vince Mendoza, the Hollywood arranger who added exotic, Les Baxterish drama to SelmaSongs, is invited back for more. New faces come in: San Francisco cosmetic surgery samplers Malmos program beats; Matthew Herbert drops by at the studio and offers some noises; film maker Harmony Korine contributes lyrics; Thomas Knak co-writes "Cocoon" and "Undo"; Zeena Parkins plays harp with her customary needle precision; and ee cummings writes a text, a poem, a song: "Sun In My Mouth". He, of course, is a member of the dead poets society, or a subject of it, and wrote "Sun In My Mouth" in 1925, blissfully unaware that pop music would become a thing of computer squibs, sampled rat cage and reprogrammed music boxes in the next century.

I asked Thomas Knak, of Opate and Future 3, about his experience of working on *Vespertine*. "Björk contacted me in summer of 1999," he writes, via email, "when she was involved in the Cancer film work in Copenhagen. She bought the Opate album in UK, had brought it with her, and found out I was Danish! One sunny day became even more sunny when there was a message from her to get in touch."

"I called her, arranged to meet up in my home and when she did we just talked about music and life... In November I received an invitation to come to Iceland for ten days in January 2000 to see what would come out of that. The basic platform for "Undo" was the result plus a few more loose sketches. I did not have any steady contact until August 2000 when she sent me an almost final version of "Undo" with a huge choir and orchestra, which completely blew me away. I very much like "Undo", as this was the first time I had the chance to see my music as a platform for someone else to use in this way with such a big sound."

"In the end of December 2000 she asked for more things as she had an idea for a new song. I worked all









right, sent that, and in January 2001 I went to London to finish that one with her in Olympia Studios.

"Cocoon" is a really quiet and intimate song which is almost naked – only my original production plus a fantastic performance from Björk, I like to think."

The three electronic contributors – Knak, Matmos and Herbert – are all very different. Yet in their own music, and maybe this is what unites them in common, they all negotiate the relationship between narrative structure and more cryptic forms with a comparable balance of innovation and accessibility. This act of reconciliation between two potential opposites – pop shapes versus emergent, prickly growth – is central to Björk's developing maturity as an artist.

I'm interested in her approach to the challenges posed by narrative in songwriting. How do you compose songs, particularly love songs, that are genuinely new, and affecting, without reprising all the structural tricks that now seem so worn out? The only model I can think of, just to be able to talk about this, is to bring Wong Kar-Wai's *In The Mood For Love* into the conversation – a film whose structure is beguilingly fragmented and allusive, yet whose emotional tenor remains compelling, deeply touching, overwhelmingly romantic.

We're upstairs now, sitting on the white plastic sofa which squeaks and sighs whenever one of us moves. A video projector is beamed to the ceiling, thus converting a contemporary interior decor problem otherwise solved only by a £7000 plasma screen. "We should get bottles of wine and talk about this for a week," she says. "I guess most things are pretty abstract. Being brought up with a lot of nature around, I'm obviously fascinated by mountains and rivers and things that don't explain themselves very much. After traveling, one of the cities I felt flattest for was New York. It was the opposite, in the sense that there aren't a lot of animals and waterfalls there, but it has a similar level of energy as Iceland, but made out of different things. It's not narrative as how I experienced traveling, especially in the old cities of Europe. It's more of an organic thing."

"But I think the true moments of narrative are an invention. It's a human invention. The most natural way for that to happen is to go camping with someone into nature and you wouldn't say anything if you were that confident with each other, you're just soaking in. After a few days, the conclusion of all that abstraction would be, after a meal, by the fire, to say, 'Once upon a time...' To draw a line between the dots and to invent the narrative, it's a human invention and a form of generosity. Putting a spell on the other person just for a moment, just to show them that there is a sense to it and we're going from A to B. Just for the gift, for one person to give it to another person. It isn't just the need for it. It proves that it's not artificial. It proves that it's a human need that's so deep, like sleeping or eating, that it's actually human. It's actually nature."

"To cut a long story short, I like both, and if you only have one or the other that's not true. A lot of patterns and rhythms are not narrative at all. They're very harmonious. It's not about chaos. To appreciate that for what it is, it's like celebrating nature or being fascinated by it. You go to a movie, to a good classic story like *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, or something, and somebody just carries you for one and a half hours. You walk out and it's a beautiful thing that somebody wants to do that. I would consider it a better work, a better CD out of all the CDs in my house, if they did both."

I'm also interested in the way that a song may broach intimate moments from private life, revealing and concealing simultaneously. Björk is fiercely protective towards her son, for example, and his

privacy, yet in the past, she has been in public scraps, seen her love life splashed in the gossip columns and been stalked by a man whose obsession was out of control. When she talks about the struggle of balancing contradictions, or opposites, then her moral imperatives come into view. Courage and cowardice are poles of an ethical standard against which she measures herself. The truth word, rrrrrrrr, to keep the Icelandic drums beating alongside her sometimes consonant free Estuary English, is another marker of personal integrity.

"Being in the media since I was 11, I still believe that you can reveal everything," she says, "but you can still have stuff for yourself. I guess compared to my friends, I just have this enormous faith in mystery, that it's bigger than us. When we say how we feel we're just guessing anyway. We don't know. I think there's almost like a Moudri thing about it and still I don't think it's a lie, I think it's the brrrrrr. You say a certain thing and by saying that you're making certain things more hidden. Especially with something like music."

"I'm really secretive. My friends will tell me something after nine bottles of whisky and four years later it's still hidden. But at the same time I can speak about those things in an interview or in a lyric but I won't let the person down, ever. I have a naive faith that there's something there that's universal, that you can share. You can jump on pink clouds and tell the whole world about it but the same time not reveal anything that's yours and your boyfriend's. To believe there is a line there, I'm driven maybe a little bit by being burned, by being hurt or having hurt people, and still having this naive faith that I can make people feel better with my songs. I don't know why but that's just the way it is and I think most people who are as obsessed with music as me still believe in that."

"That's why we're doing it. I think it would be a coward who would say, 'OK, I'm never gonna write about things that are precious to me anymore.' That's a bit of a cop out, really. You can do both things, you know? To find that thin line is a challenge, it's quite a turn on. Maybe that's what you are saying, when you're asking me if it's tricky to write love songs. Just to write a love song that would make everybody want to run out and kiss their girlfriend or their boyfriend would be easy. To write a love song to your girlfriend or your boyfriend that they could then never show to anyone else that would be very easy too. Like a present. But to combine the two worlds without compromising either. Again, maybe, it's a lot of guessing on my behalf, but maybe that's trying to prove that one plus one is three. That's even better, both for the lover and for the world. It doesn't have to be X-rated, either way."

These issues relate back to a storytelling tradition that is central to Icelandic history and still a vibrant part of its contemporary culture. Back in October I found myself in Damon Albarn's bar in Reykjavik, four in the morning, drunk as a skunk with Bragi Olafsson, the two of us talking nonsense with a complete stranger. Earlier in the evening at Olafsson's flat, he had insisted on playing, or presenting to us, with impassioned speech making and dramatic finality, the songs of Billy Strayhorn, as sung by Strayhorn himself. Olafsson once played bass with The Sugarcubes but now he's a celebrated poet and novelist in Iceland. Talking to him, and to the poet, composer, dancer and experimentalist known succinctly as Sjöfn – a lyric writer on SelmaSongs and a big influence on Björk in her teenage anarcho-punk days – I was impressed by the value they ascribe to literature and the power of words. The music of words is a serious business, a magical business.

"The melody serves the word, 'elevating' it, so to speak, perhaps originally lifting it above the buzzing of



the spinning wheel and the scratching sound of the combs in our grandparents' living room. This is the way it has been in Iceland since the first Icelanders sang or chanted the Eddic lays at the time of the settlement – as I am convinced they did. It was not until the late 19th century that Icelanders began composing melodies for their own sake.

— Jón Thórhannsson, sleeve notes to *Raddir* (Voices): Recordings Of Folksongs From The Archives Of The Arni Magnússon Institute In Iceland

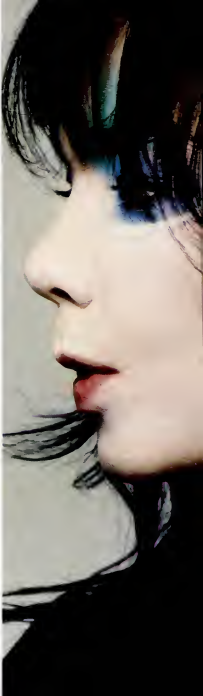
Landscape writes its own calligraphy: a scene without perspective, falling in horizontal Rothko strips of white sky shroud, black mountain flayed by ice, a deep band of brown earth, and at the foot of the frame, the scimitar curves of a silver lake. Why was I there in Iceland, with Joan La Barbara and David Fricke? Because the Bad Taste organisation, of which Björk was once a part, had organised a festival to examine and celebrate the intimate relationship between words and music. I was invited to do a reading on an evening that included performances by Sigur Rós, La Barbara, Ólafsson and Sýn, in duo with the irrepressible noise musician and 'chaos DJ' Bibbi, and the whimsically wonderful digital folk pop of Múm interspersed among a host of poets and musicians. I was also there to contribute to a discussion. This included one lecture illustrated by an obscure Sonny & Cher B side. Sonny Bono sitting at the piano, talking to Cher about having to record a B side. My kind of discussion.

Reykjavik being small, it's possible to meet many of the key players in current cultural life, not to mention Björk's early development, in the course of a few days. Spending time in the company of Asmundur Jónsson, radio DJ, musicologist and a driving force behind Bad Taste, I find myself talking about Ennio Morricone's Easy Listening albums and early improvised music records, all kinds of unexpected stuff, plus shaking hands with a stream of musicians, DJs, poets and artists. Here I am, face to face in the street with Finnogi Pétursson, a sculptor who has been exploring the effects of sound on spatial turbulence since the 1980s. His exhibition at the Reykjavik Living Art Museum in 1990-91, for example, included a work called Circle, a large loudspeaker suspended over a darkened pit filled with water. As the loudspeaker directed 0-200 kHz sinewave tones down onto the water, a projector threw the image of the rippled liquid surface onto the wall. This is an idea that may be familiar to followers of recent sound art.

Beneath its placid demeanour, Reykjavik bubbles with hothouse intensity. Add to that Iceland's isolation. "Your brother would be in a Death Metal band and your neighbour would be in a disco band," says Björk, "and then they would meet down the pub on the weekend and they would form a third band together and that would be a folk band or something. It wasn't these categories, for sure. It was more about expressing. I guess it's also to do with Iceland being so far away and us looking at the rest of the world from a distance. The scene is so small but the horizon is so big, unlike England where the scene is so big but the horizon is so small." This is a culture built on long winter nights, sagas, oral culture, survival; fiercely independent, defiantly different.

"Most clichés about countries being different nowadays are wrong," she says, "because it's all becoming the same thing really. I don't really watch telly until I was about 20. Most of my friends doing the poetry stuff, we're very used to storytelling. When we were touring, The Sugarbushes, we would be reading stories out to each other from books or poems people did the night before. There'd be evenings when we'd be in some stupid hotel in Texas and we'd all go to Bragi's room and he'd read to us his latest poems and it wouldn't even be pretentious or intellectual. It's a very basic thing, like listening to the new Aphex Twin

"There's more people, a lot of whistling vocals, which I think sounds amazing when they're downloaded because of the whistling of the medium"







album. It's down to earth. My English friends will go out with my Icelandic friends and somebody will start telling a story in a dub. The story will take two hours and my English friends get bored stiff and leave. I'm not saying it's good or bad. I'm just saying it's different. I found it a little bit with Irish people. They still have a little bit of that."

Recently, Björk has moved to New York to live. I want to know her feelings about her voice and the way she has been using ProTools editing software for the past few years, sculpting her voice into regions that are no longer entirely human. Her enthusiasm for Manhattan finds its way into her answer once again.

"I've always been a bit into extremes," she says. "I guess partly because I was brought up by a mum who thought that anything made by man was evil or something. I'm exaggerating now, of course. I think it was when I was about 20, the first time I went to Manhattan. I realised it was human invention. Manhattan is a great idea, you know? Just to walk between the skyscrapers felt not different to walking in the valley or the mountains. The impression they have on you is pretty strong – a lot of presence. My conclusion – not just me but my generation almost, a reaction against the hippies – is that anything that man does has to be natural because man is natural. This whole idea of the industrial age and Western civilisation, thinking that what we did wasn't nature and suggesting that man was greater than nature, has come full circle and now I would think something like that would be very arrogant. You can't separate yourself from nature."

"I think most technology, it's tools. What we do with them, whether it's cold or soulful, that's our choice. I also think there's a lot of guilt there that was put in me and my generation. I'm not going to blame all that on my mum. That's more of a generational thing. What are you going to do? Move to an island for the rest of your life and be barefoot. Why drive a car all your life and feel guilty about it? Do it or skip it. I think it's important to have a union – the lives we're living and what we're doing, the music we're writing and the books we're reading and writing, that it all makes sense. It all works together. We're not doing one thing and feeling it's ugly. Not going. Well, if I could choose I'd actually be in a Fred Flintstone car. Get a life, you know? I think my generation was very interested in sorting that one out. In the '80s, having 50 TVs in a back and learning to find a pretty, definitely come from that school of thought, that you can be organic and pagan and have ProTools."

This drive to unite the digital domain with the corporeal, imaginative world has contributed to some unusual choices of instrumentation for *Vespertine*. Harp, clavi chord, celeste and music box are all percussive, melodic, brittle instruments with a limited frequency range. "I picked those winter instruments," she says. "They are for me, like winter music, like frozen. I thought this album was frozen, like crystals. None of them confrontational. They're kind. There are times when you're not going to have any contact by screaming at people."

"On a musical level, I was obsessed with my laptop. I was getting really into it, the last three years, doing beats and recording my vocals straight on it, which is revolutionary for me. So I was really obsessed. I obviously downloading stuff from the net and emailing back and forth and getting occupied with that element of laptops. It's all a secret. There's no oxygen in that world. It operates like your mind. Your thought process is very similar."

"And then musicians complaining about Napster and how downloading music really compromises it and me thinking, wait a minute, that's a bit naïf. We've been doing folk music or whatever you call it for 2000 years

and the instruments, the tools you use, if they're limited it means you have to be more imaginative and creative. 100 years ago, radio arrived and the first music that was going on then sounded crap on the radio. Later on, humans became genius in writing and arranging and producing specifically for radio. Now we've got the Napster thing, the internet and downloading and you write specifically for that."

"I use micro-beats, a lot of whispery vocals, which I think sound amazing when they're downloaded because of the secrecy of the medium. The only acoustic instruments I would use would be those that sound good after they've been downloaded, so the harp, the music box, celeste and clavi chord. They're plucky sounds. Actually you can do a harp solo and download it in crap quality and it still sounds magical on the other side. And the strings – it took me ages to work out if I should use strings or not. Obviously they shouldn't be a quartet or an octet where they're very narrative and in your face. They ended up being more panoramic textures in the background. It's all about being in the little house, on your own. You're creating paradise with your laptop, or underneath your kitchen table where nobody knows about it. It's survival in that sense. The strings would be like white mountains outside. That's two reasons for using those instruments."

This is the kind of thinking that distinguishes Björk from virtually any other celebrity musician of the moment, and surely one of the reasons she is so successful. Her awareness of the demands and potential of digital technology is finely tuned, yet she cares deeply about stories, about communication and the urgent desires of being human. "I learned to sing by myself by walking outside in Iceland," she says. "I can be clever about any areas but I won't let logic into my voice. There's no fucking way."

She relates the fruitful contradictions of her character to her childhood. "My mum left my dad when I was one," she says, "and she was very determined, like a lot of women of her generation, that she wasn't gonna be a suppressed housewife. She ended up renting a place with a lot of like-minded people. It wasn't a hippy commune. They all had jobs but they definitely were from that generation. There was music on 24 hours a day, which I really enjoyed. I remember a queue by the record player. The record would finish and you'd be ready to put another one on."

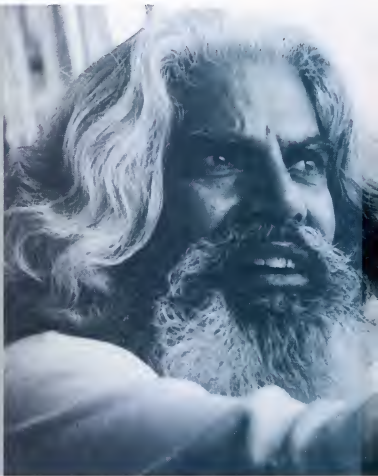
"My grandparents would listen to jazz. My mum and them would listen to hippy music and I just remember myself walking a lot between the two houses and singing at the top of my lungs. I didn't realise this until recently but I was inventing that kind of singing style, whatever it is, which is made for acoustic singing rather than microphone."

"I guess it's also to do with the fact that my father is very working class. He's an electrician who turned union leader. He's always telling the politicians off, cut the crap, and he's the only one who'll speak the everyday language that people understand. I can be as eclectic, idiosyncratic and eccentric as fuck but the final target for me, in my morality, in how I'm brought up, is always that it's for everyone. I can't lie when I sing. It's a good thing and a bad thing. With ProTools, it's not like you're lying but it's easier to focus on what you want things to be. For me, ProTools are more connected with a fantasy than my voice more with reality. For me, perhaps it's a fantasy 50 per cent and reality 50 per cent. With the tools I can have everything I want and think of ridiculous things that don't exist but with my voice I'm always gonna show what happened to me that day, that month, that year. I can't hide anything and I actually quite like that." □ *Vespertine* is out now on One Little Indian. Björk tours a selection of UK opera houses during September and October: see Out There




**Pandit Pran Nath** (1918-1996) was a guardian of the Kirana vocal tradition, and the producer of an extraordinary archive of still unreleased raga recordings. Five years after his death, he continues to issue a powerful call to a realm of perfect sound in which opposites of tradition and modernity, East and West, sacred and profane unite within the resonant spaces of the tambura drone. Marcus Boon follows Pran Nath's footsteps from Lahore to New York to discover how this enigmatic figure became a guru to many of America's postwar avant garde, including La Monte Young, Terry Riley and Jon Hassell

infinity's pathfinder







**The sun is going down** outside the magenta tinted windows of La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela's Dream House in Tribeca, New York. It is a summer evening in June 2001 (or 01 VI 10 7:01:00 PM NYC, to use Young's own calendrical system). The synthesized, just intonation tuned pitch frequencies of the drone work that usually saturates this space by day are silent, giving way to the annual memorial raga cycle in honour of Pandit Pran Nath. The minimal decor of this room, in which Young and Zazeela's musical and spiritual guru lived from 1977-79, is transformed by a small shrine, with a picture of Pran Nath, flowers, and burning incense. Young and Zazeela sit behind a mixing desk in the centre of the room, in full space age biker sadidhu gear, introducing a selection of raga recordings from their MELA Foundation archives, as the small crowd – a mixture of devoted former Pran Nath students and current protégés of Young – lounge on the floor or against the wall. Unless you are lucky enough to own one of the long unavailable recordings made by Pran Nath, this once a year event is currently the only way that you can hear what his performances sounded like.

No Indian music resembles Young's 1970s recordings of Pran Nath. The droning tamburas are located high up in the mix, as loud, rich and powerful as vintage Theater Of Eternal Music (the group Young and Zazeela formed in the mid-60s and which included John Cale, Tony Conrad and Angus MacLise). The table playing is simple but tough. The midnight raga Malkauns is traditionally said to describe a yogi beset by tempting demons while meditating. Recorded in 1975 in a SoHo studio in New York, Pran Nath's version is unspeakably moving as he slowly chants the composition *Hare Krishna Govinda Ram* over and over, his voice winding in stretched out, subtly nuanced glissandos that leave you begging for the next note. The 62 minute recording adheres to the slow, minimal style of the Kirana school of Indian classical music which Pran Nath belonged to, while encapsulating everything that was happening in the city that year, the same year that Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* hit the movie houses. Pran Nath's voice and Young's production turn the city into a modern sacred hyperspace, full of tension and beauty, in which anything, from Krishna to Son of Sam, can manifest.

As the music sends me into one of Young's "drone states of mind", I recall another sunset, a few months before, on the other side of the world. I am standing with a group of raga students at the gate of Tapkeshwar, a 5000 year old cave temple devoted to Siva, located about ten miles north of Dehra Dun in

the foothills of the Indian Himalayas, when the aged temple keeper turns to us and asks, "Where is Terry Riley?" Around us a steady flow of pilgrims, young and old, climb down the steps to the entrance of the cave, to pour water over the Siva lingam in the heart of the temple. Not a place one would necessarily expect to find one of America's most prolific composers of the postwar era. But over the last 30 years, Riley has been a frequent visitor to this cave, where Pran Nath, his guru and instructor in the North Indian classical tradition, the man he has called "the greatest musician I have ever heard", lived for a number of years in the 1940s.

If Riley's presence in Tapkeshwar comes as a surprise, it seems equally unlikely that Pran Nath, a reclusive, classically trained Indian singer who spent his time at Tapkeshwar living as a naked, ash covered ascetic, singing only for God, should end his days in the former New York Meccanite Exchange Building that housed Young and Zazeela's Dream House, teaching Indian classical music to a broad spectrum of America's avant garde musicians, including Jon Hassell, Charlemagne Palestine, Arnold Dreyblatt, Rhys Chatham, Henry Flynt, Yoshi Wade and Don Cherry. Although virtually unknown in India, Pran Nath's devotion to purity of tone resonates through key minimalist masterworks like Young's *The Well-Tuned Piano*, Riley's just intonation keyboard piece *Descending Moonshine Dervishes*, Henry Flynt's extraordinary raga fiddling, Charlemagne Palestine's drone works and Jon Hassell's entire *Fourth World* output.

Pran Nath was born on 3 November 1916, into a wealthy family in Lahore, Pakistan. In the early 20th century, the city was known as the flower of the Punjab, with its own rich musical tradition. As Terry Riley remembers it, Pran Nath painted an idyllic picture of the musical culture of Lahore during this period, in which Hindu and Muslim musicians would practise outdoors in different parts of the city, congregating to perform and exchange compositions, and to hang out with their friends, the westeners, with whom they formed a fraternity. Many great masters including Bede Gulam Ali Khan, and Pran Nath's own guru Abud Wahid Khan, lived in Lahore.

Pran Nath knew from an early age that his vocation was to be a musician, and his grandfather invited musicians into the home to perform in the evenings. But while many eminent Indian classical musicians come from families of musicians, and speak of parents whispering ragas or tal cycles to them as they sleep, Pran Nath's mother wanted her son to pursue a law career, and, at the age of 13, gave him the choice



There were no collaborations with Western artists, no fusion experiments, no compromises. "This business is only for the contentment of your soul," Pran Nath would say.

of abandoning music or leaving home. So he left immediately, and wandered, looking for a teacher, until he came upon Abdul Wahid Khan at a music conference. Pran Nath claimed that he was able to copy every musician he heard until he encountered Wahid Khan, and on this basis decided to become his student.

Abdul Wahid Khan, along with his uncle Abdul Karim Khan, was one of the two major figures of the Kirana gharana, one of North India's most important families of vocal music – an austere, pious man, with a powerful voice, an encyclopedic knowledge of raga, famed for his methodical elaboration of the alap, the slow improvisatory section of the raga. It is said that when he gave rare radio performances, while other singers would go home after the broadcast, Khansahab could often be found 20 hours later, still performing the same raga. When asked once why he only practised two ragas, the morning raga *Todi* and the evening raga *Darbari*, he replied that, had the morning lasted for ever, he would have dropped the evening raga too.

Becoming a student of Wahid Khan was no easy matter. Pran Nath had no family connections, no money and was a Hindu while Wahid Khan was a devout Muslim. So Pran Nath worked for eight years as Wahid Khan's household servant, before he was finally taken on as a disciple, at the urging of Wahid Khan's cook. Even after that, life was not easy. Pran Nath was not allowed to practice in his guru's presence, so he would go into the jungle at night to do so. Sometimes he was beaten if he sang a note incorrectly.

Pran Nath's vocal abilities were recognised early on: he made his first appearance on All India Radio in 1937. However, the time that he was not serving his teacher he spent living at Tapkeshwar, naked except for a covering of ashes, and singing for God. It is likely that Pran Nath would have remained there, had Wahid Khan not ordered his student, in his guru *dukshana* (last request), to get married, become a householder and take his music out into the world. This Pran Nath did, moving to Delhi and marrying in 1949. That year, Wahid Khan died.

By all accounts, hearing Pran Nath in full flow at this time was an extraordinary experience. At the All India Music Conference in Delhi in 1953, attended by many of the giants of the classical music scene, Pran Nath's

performance of the rainy season raga *Mian Ki Mahtar* stunned the 5000-strong crowd. Singer and early disciple Karunamaye recalled that when he hit the 'sa' note, "He held the breath of us all, collected our breath through his own breath, held it at one pitch and then let go. When he let go, we also let go, all 5000 people in the audience. It was a shock to me. All this can be done with music! And when he ended there was torrential rain! Suddenly he got up, he was very sad and frustrated and angry and said, 'I'm not a musician, I'm only a teacher', and walked off."

Shattered by his guru's death, and contemptuous of modern Indian society, Pran Nath was a moody, imposing figure during his Delhi days. He began teaching, and quickly gathered students, who were mostly reduced to silence by his skills. Singer and long-time student Sheila Ojar recalled in her memoirs: "His lessons consisted mainly in demonstrations of heavy, serious ragas in his own voice. Most of the time we listened in hypnotised states of awe. He had a way of exploring a single note in such detail that it turned from a single point or tone into a vast area that glowed like a mirage. Each of us encountered this magic at different times. Whenever it happened, it overwhelmed us like a religious experience. There was no question of our even trying to repeat this sort of thing. All we could do was to drink it all in and wait for a chance to participate in some undefined way in the distant future."

The study of Indian classical music had undergone rapid transformation in the 20th century. The traditional guru-disciple relationship that Pran Nath had participated in became an increasingly rare thing by the middle of the century, as the patronage of the Maharajas and their courts disappeared. Radio, music festivals and recording encouraged a popularisation of classical music that favoured the light classical genres of thumri and ghazal over the intense, drawn out species of khayal and dhrupad, which Pran Nath was devoted to. After independence in 1947, the teaching of music was increasingly transferred to the universities. Pran Nath himself taught advanced classes in Hindustani classical vocal music at Delhi University between 1960 and 1970 – a prestigious position, but one he took little pleasure in, believing that only daily, one-on-one study with a knowledgeable master over a sustained period could properly train a musician.

Among Pran Nath's students in the 1960s was Shyam Bhatnagar, an Indian emigré who ran a yoga academy in New Jersey. It was Bhatnagar who first brought recordings of Pran Nath home to America, where La Monte Young got to hear them. Young had been listening to Indian classical music since the mid-50s, and credits hearing the tambura sound on an early Ali Akbar Khan recording as one of the major influences on his groundbreaking sustained tone pieces such as 1958's *Two For Strings*.

Throughout the 60s Young and his circle were listening to recordings of the great Indian masters. The Pran Nath recordings they heard in 1967, with their majestic alaps and extraordinarily precise intonation, both key elements of the Kirana style, were at once new, but also uncannily similar to Young's own music. "If you take all the gharanas ['schools'] of Indian music] and place them on a line with pitch at one end and rhythm at the other," Young states, "the Kirana gharana would be at the extreme of the pitch end of the line, and Pandit Pran Nath would be at the extreme pitch end of the Kirana gharana. So the fact that I was so interested in pitch relationships, the fact that I was interested in sustenance and drones, drew me toward Pandit Pran Nath."

In 1970, Young, Zareela and Bhatnagar invited Pran Nath to America, after procuring grant money for him and a teaching position at the New School for Social Research in New York. In a piece written for the *Village Voice* in May 1970, headlined "The Sound Is God", a euphoric Young enthused over Pran Nath's intonation: "His singing was the most beautiful I had ever heard." But although Young emphasised Pran Nath's rock solid foundations in the Kirana vocal style, his interpretation of his teacher was hardly a traditional one. After praising Pran Nath's perfect intonation and melodic abilities, the article launched into a discussion of the physics of sound, and the effect of different frequencies, measured in hertz, on neurons in the vibrating membranes in the ear. "When a specific set of harmonically related frequencies is continuous or repeated," Young concluded, "as is often the case in my music and Indian music, it could more definitively produce (or simulate) a psychological state that may be reported by the listener since the set of harmonically related frequencies will continuously trigger a specific set of the auditory neurons which in turn will continuously perform the same operation of





Pran Nath's guru Abdul Wahid Khan, 1972 concert at Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York; Pran Nath (centre) surrounded by Krishna Bharti, La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Marvin Zazeela and Michael Henrichs; Young, Pran Nath and Zazeela at the Dream House, 1982

transmitting a periodic pattern of impulses to the corresponding set of fixed points in the cerebral cortex."

In the early 70s, Young demonstrated Pran Nath's ability to produce and sustain very precise sound frequencies using an oscilloscope, and to this day he is as likely to introduce a raga by expressing the tonic in hertz rather than more traditional means. The notion that all aesthetic experience, be it music, film or drug induced, is a form of programming of the nervous system, was a common one in the 60s, inspired by Hindu scholar Alan Danielou. Young applied this idea to raga and its concern for evoking specific moods by use of specific pitch relationships.

In May 1970, Pran Nath made his first trip to the West Coast, where he met Young's longtime associate Terry Riley. Young, Zazeela and subsequently Riley all became formal disciples of Pran Nath, committing themselves to extensive study with him and to providing his material needs in return for lessons. For many years, Pran Nath lived in Young and Zazeela's loft while in New York, and in Riley's loft in San Francisco, until in the mid-80s, in declining health after a heart attack in 1978, he moved into his own house in Berkeley, where he remained, for the most part, until his death on 13 June 1996. On both East and West Coasts, members of Sufi communities studied with Pran Nath, but in New York there was also Young and Zazeela's ghazal-like circle of downtown musicians.

During this period, Young, Zazeela and Riley, and later trumpeter Jon Hassell, accompanied Pran Nath on his return trips to India, often staying for extended periods of time to study music at a temple in Dikra Dun, where Pran Nath was temple musician to Swami Narayan Giri, former temple keeper at Tapkeshwar. "We'd come to the temple early in the morning," recalls Hassell, "and Swami would be there. I remember playing on the roof for him. He came up and sat and listened to me, with these brilliant eyes shining and smiling, seeing what I was doing on the trumpet. We would go to the market, buy two ladu [balls of hashish and almond paste] and listen to the children sing, the arti bells clapping, the swallows overhead, the muezlin singing from the minaret nearby. I mean, it was total ecstasy!"

These trips gradually evolved into a yearly ritual,

which has continued under the guidance of Riley and West Coast Sufi teacher Shabde Kahn. The pair still take groups each year to visit Pran Nath's sacred places. There, they would study with Kirana masters like Mashkur Ali Khan, a 45 year old blood relative of Abdul Wahid Khan, who commands a vast knowledge of ragas and a fiery vocal technique.

Young, Zazeela and Riley's commitment to Pran Nath involved more than a superficial absorption of a few Indian mantras. For a decade and a half, Pran Nath lived in Young and Zazeela's loft for a good part of each year, and the New York night owls were typically required to rise at 3am each day to prepare tea for their teacher, who slept at the other end of the loft. He would then perform his riaz (practice) and give them a lesson – if he chose to.

"He was the head of the household," recalls Young. "We were not allowed to have friends. We had to give up everything – rarely did we even get to visit our parents. He was very protective of us and extremely possessive of us. But we got the reward. The reward is, if you make the guru happy, then you get the lessons."

Much of the rest of the day would be spent taking care of his financial affairs, booking students and concerts, and raising money for dowries so that his three daughters in India could get married. Riley, Young and Zazeela all sacrificed their own careers while serving Gurpur (as he was affectionately known), alienating parents who thought they should be focusing on their own work. According to Henry Flynt, John Cale once quipped that it was Pran Nath who should be taking lessons from La Monte, since he was the one with the "hard sound".

Another part of discipleship was teaching. "He ordered us to make his own school," Young recalls, "the Kirana School for Indian Classical Music, and then he ordered us to teach. And when I said, 'No, Gurji, I'm not ready,' he said, 'You have to do as I say, it's not up to you.'" Pran Nath made a similar demand of Riley, and Riley, Young and Zazeela have continued teaching Kirana-style Indian classical vocal to this day. Conversely, Pran Nath began teaching at Mills College in Oakland in 1973, and continued until 1984.

Pran Nath was not without his detractors. Anyone hearing him perform after 1978 would have experienced only a shadow of his former powers, since

he suffered a heart attack in that year and developed Parkinson's disease during the following decade. Even in his prime, Pran Nath was an unorthodox performer, rejecting crowdpleasing duels with tabla players, for stretched out slaps, often dwelling on the first three notes of a raga for 15 minutes or more. "Sometimes," recalls Riley, "in the middle of the raga he would suddenly stop and start singing another raga in a performance and it would feel fine. He would maybe sing one tone that would remind him of that other raga and he'd get so inspired he'd just go off into that."

Pran Nath himself cared little about building a public reputation: in India, he snubbed critics and patrons, insulted master musicians during their performances, and had an aversion to recording and radio work. Even in America, throwing in his lot with Young and the New York avant garde or the California Sufis was hardly a guaranteed road to fame and fortune. Aside from one track recorded with The Kronos Quartet in 1993 ("Aba Kee Teyk Hamaree"/"It Is My Turn, Oh Lord" from Short Stories), there were no collaborations with Western artists, no "fusion" experiments, no compromises. He didn't care. "This business is only for the contentment of your soul," he would say.

Although he was a firm believer in tradition, Pran Nath himself was an outsider in India. Famous singers including Bhimsen Joshi and Salamat and Nazakat Ali Khan ("They spoiled my lessons!" Pran Nath claimed in 1972) came to him to increase their knowledge of specific ragas, yet he himself never became a celebrity and never issued any recordings there. "Those who know music know his place," says The Hindustan Times's music critic Shanta Serjeet Singh. "He was not a musician with a performer personality: he was too intense, too withdrawn."

According to composer Charlemagne Palestine, Pran Nath was attracted to the American avant garde because "he was out of his culture, he rarely went home, he preferred to be in the West. As we were tormented by being a lost culture looking for our roots, he was tormented, being from a culture with enormous roots that he could no longer live in socially, as a normal member." But despite Pran Nath's reported fondness for Chivas Regal and watching television, he was not unduly impressed with the West either. Mathematician and composer Catherine Christer Hennix, another Pran Nath student and protégé of Young, recalls, "The only time I remember he was



"We were watching a programme about whales. Pran Nath heard the whales sing and he started to cry. That was his most profound spiritual experience of the Western world."

enthusiastic, we were in San Francisco. He liked to watch TV, and we were watching a programme about whales. He heard the whales sing and he started to cry. That was his most profound spiritual experience of the Western world."

Pran Nath's relationship with the minimalists can be seen as part of a broader history of cultural exchange between East and West that blossomed in the 20th century. Debussy began the century taking inspiration from Balinese gamelan; while in America a variety of composers, including Charles Ives, Henry Cowell and Harry Partch, explored and appropriated different elements of Indian and oriental musics. As performers like Ali Akbar Khan and Ravi Shankar made their first tours of the USA and Europe in the mid-50s, it became possible for Westerners to study with them: Shankar, for example, performed at one of Stockhausen's 1957 Darmstadt seminars.

For the post-Cage generation, who had already taken the leap beyond notated composition into the uncharted worlds of improvisation, ambient sound, chance operations and systems, Asian classical music offered a way of reconciling the structural concerns of the Western classical tradition with the freedom of improvisation. Nearly all of the minimalists actually studied with major figures in the Eastern classical music tradition in the late 60s and early 70s: Young, Riley and Paley with Pran Nath; Philip Glass with Ravi Shankar and tabla maestro Alla Rakha; Steve Reich, Palestine and Ingram Marshall with Indonesian gamelan ensembles.

The effect of study with Pran Nath on Young and Riley's work is difficult to measure, since, when they first met their teacher, both were already in their thirties with major works behind them. Young speaks of Pran Nath's use of *badhai*, "a magical formula for the organic unfolding of the alap improvisations", as a crucial influence on post-1970 versions of *The Well Tuned Piano*. Indeed, both Young and Riley's keyboard/piano works from the 70s surf on a seemingly infinite ocean of melodic variation that is sustained by *badhai*.

Pran Nath's emphasis on precision of tone, viewed through the prism of Young's own passion for Just Intonation (tuning systems that exploit the natural harmonics that exist between certain sound frequencies, such as those used in Indian classical

music and many other World Musics), made possible a new synthesis of Eastern and Western musical systems. This synthesis can be heard to great effect on the *Tamburas Of Pandit Pran Nath*, the recently issued first release on Young and Zazeela's Just Dreams label: a single 77 minute recording of a drone created by Young and Zazeela on two of the *tamburas* that Pran Nath himself designed, static but sparkling with natural overtones. The *tamburas*' tuning and the way they are played are traditional, but whereas in Indian music the instruments usually accompany a vocal or instrumental recital, here their hypnotic sound becomes the sole focus, which can be heard simultaneously as a sustained-tone minimalist artefact and as a high resolution homage to one of the fundamental building blocks of Hindustani music.

Like his guru, Abdul Wahid Khan, Pran Nath was dismissive of the idea of records until quite late in his life. Nevertheless, from his time in Delhi in the 60s onwards, students did tape his performances, and finally in return for large sums of money sourced from foundations approached by Young and Zazeela, Pran Nath finally agreed to make recordings in the 70s and 80s. His first release *Earth Grove* was issued in 1968 without his knowledge on Alan Douglas's Douglas label, culled from home recordings made in Delhi. The sound quality is much better on 1972's *Ragas Yaman Kalyan and Punjabi Bani*, issued by the French label Shandar, which also released Young's work during this period. In 1986 (and on CD in 1993) Gramercy put out *Ragas Of Morning And Night*, comprising 1968 recordings by Alan Douglas of ragas *Todi* and *Darban*. In his will, Pran Nath made Young and Zazeela the executors of his estate, and also requested that they issue the contents of these tapes; but so far, attempts to issue further recordings have met the same fate that has befallen Young's own work. However, three CDs of vintage Pran Nath are set for release over the next year: LA's Cortical Foundation is set to issue a two CD set with two versions of *Raga Malkaus*, recorded in the 1970s; Zakir Hussain's Moment Records will put out a 1973 recording of *Raga Jajaiwanti* next summer; and Just Dreams has plans for a 1983 recording of *Raga Wintabani Sarang*.

After meeting Pran Nath in 1970, Riley had all his keyboards retuned to Just Intonation pitches, which were used in his 70s extended keyboard pieces,

*Persian Surgery Derivishes*, *Shri Camel* and *Descending Moonshine Derivishes*. Catherine Christer Hennix recorded her still unreleased Just Intonation masterpiece *The Electric Harpsichord* ("actually *Raga Multani* played on a well tuned electronic harpsichord") in 1975. More recently, when West Coast Sufi teacher WA Mathieu published his epic 1997 book *Harmonic Experience*, an attempt to reconcile the modern Western equal tempered scale with the universe of Just Intonation, it was dedicated to his teacher, Pran Nath. New York composer/pianist Michael Harrison, the principal tuner of Young's *Well Tuned Piano*, has also recently begun to perform ragas, along with his own *From Ancient Worlds*, on what he calls "the harmonically tuned piano".

Terry Riley's most clearly Pran Nath-inspired piece is *Songs For The Ten Voices Of The Two Prophets* (1983), an impressive song cycle, with Riley displaying his raga moves over two Prophet synthesizers. But for Young, Zazeela and Riley, Pran Nath's importance was as much spiritual as musical. According to Riley, Pran Nath "strongly believed that music should be an offering to God. In that sense it should have its purest intentions, always have the musician's deepest concentration, and that the musician should make this offering as beautiful and pure as he can. And in this way, he never thought of himself as singing for people. He used to say many times that, if a musician is saying to himself as he's singing, 'I am singing for other people', then this would be a second rate kind of music. But if it's an offering for God, then it's done with the deepest emotional, mental, spiritual and physical perfection."

But although Pran Nath spent much of his life around both Muslim and Hindu holy men, it was music itself which formed his spiritual practice. In 1977, he declared: "Music is the language of God; it is a holy thing! Music and spirit are the same, like two hands. Music is not religion. It is the same in the temples of India, at the Himalayas, in a village in Africa."

While a number of these high profile students of Pran Nath became his formal disciples, there were others who avoided becoming so closely involved with his circle. "I never became a disciple," recalls Henry Flynt, the reclusive composer and violinist whose work has only begun to surface this year on labels such as Recorded and Ampersand, "because the culture of the





Above: With students (Ann and Terry Riley, Zazeela and Young) in the Hissidages, 1971; Ryan for Morning Ragas concert, New York Town Hall, 1971; Pran Nath's Indian passport photo, mid-60s

apprentice and the master, that kind of authority... I have a problem with that. I am culturally extremely American. It was all I could do to take private lessons and behave myself – that already tested my ability to submit to somebody else's regimen." This distance may have given Ryan the freedom to produce the extraordinary track "You Are My Everlong", which includes an explosive fiddle rendering of Raga Tilang, performed over a tape of Christer Hennix on tambura. Several tracks on the recently issued *Graduation* (reviewed in *The Wire* 21.0) also reflect his raga studies, including the title track, "a hillbilly response to the low-and-slow vocals of Pran Nath".

Although he formulated his notion of "new American Ethnic Music" in the early 60s after abandoning a burgeoning interest in New Music for John Coltrane and Country blues, Ryan's cosmically inclusive "ethnic music" (he describes his "Lonesome Train Dreams" as "contemporary cowboy raga over tonic pedal-point harmony and a polymeric rhythm niff") has similarities to the Fourth World music of fellow Pran Nath non-disciple, Jon Hassell. Ryan speaks of the importance of the meend, a sliding movement between the notes which Pran Nath specialised in. Ryan describes this form of glissando as "that dying cow sound", and acknowledges it as a key component in much of the music he loves, from Country pedal steel and Robert Johnson's bottleneck guitar blues, to John Coltrane's shenai-like runs on the soprano saxophone. This in turn became one of Hassell's trumpet signatures. "I had to find a way to make the meend," Hassell recalls, "by using my lips as a secondary voice, transferring the vibration point from the vocal fold to the lips and thinking of it as a conch sound, blowing primitively into it and making the patches with just the lips and the resonating chamber."

Hassell had joined Young's Theater Of Eternal Music in the late 60s, after studying with Stockhausen at Darmstadt and playing on Riley's *In C*. He remembers a significant moment prior to a performance in Rome in the early 1970s: "I was warming up in the space one day, playing some pazzam, and Gurup picked it up and started singing it and running rags around it and I thought, 'why am I not studying with this man?'"

The notion of Fourth World music coalesced as Hassell discovered the depth and breadth of Pran Nath's approach to music, one which could incorporate many different musical forms within the vast harmonic

matrix of the well tuned tambura, and the melodic line that the individual raga weaves through the matrix. Study with Pran Nath opened Hassell to "a microworld of connections, it allowed me to see African and African American music, every music through the lens of that shape making ability". The sequence of records Hassell issued in the late 70s and early 80s, beginning with Vernet Equino and including *Possible Musics*, *Dream Theory* in Malaya and *Aka-Carban-Java*, all explore the common melodic and rhythmic ground between different World Musics, held together by the universal constant of the drone.

Virtually all of Pran Nath's musician students made contact with their teacher through association with Young and Zazeela. An exception is Charlemagne Palestine, who met Pran Nath in New York when he was 20, and studied with him briefly, without becoming a disciple. For Palestine, who had begun his life in music singing in New York synagogues as a child, Pran Nath provided a link between the explosive world of the avant garde and a lost sense of tradition. "I was brought up with that notion of genius: that you do something that nobody else did and you try not even to do what you did after a while otherwise you're already finished. Which is the contrary of the Oriental tradition where you make more and more perfect the tradition which goes from generation to generation."

Palestine points out that Pran Nath succeeded in bringing together Young's Mormon roots, Riley's Irish Catholic roots, his own Jewish background. "At that time we were all searching for a kind of identity. Our own born tribal units had disintegrated into an American patibulum, and so it was hard to say who you were if you were American. What his being there helped me to feel was that I was continuing the chant of the synagogue, and that we were all part of some larger force that was coming of age, that would then create a new kind of world. His being there and attracting so many people and his coming from such an ancient culture was a very powerful social force."

Palestine's search for what he calls "the golden sound" was stimulated by Pran Nath's emphasis on teaching the sa, the tonic note in a raga scale (often his students would sing nothing but sa for the first year or two). Aside from vocal pieces like the recently reissued *Kareena*, Palestine connects works like the stunning 1988 church organ drone piece *Schlingens-Blangen* to Pran Nath's sa: "It's not sung, it's sung by

an anomalous instrument, but it's a way of humming in space." Having started out as a singer, the singing of Pran Nath, along with the synagogue singers of his youth, provided the model for a perfect sound: "The pure voice without anything else is the most intimate and expressive sound that a being can make. If it's an animal, it's their screech, or the bark of a dog. For me there's nothing more intimate, and the essence of the animal or the being is the voice. Even though I did many things that were not the voice, But I started with the voice. And he was the voice."

Although musicians who encountered him continue to sing his praises, opinions vary as to what Pran Nath thought of his students' non-raga musical activities. A man of few words, with no time for politeness or other formalities, Pran Nath generally supported his students' activities, without actually commenting on them. Hennix says, "In the sense that he didn't have anything to say about it, that was his way of talking about it. I think he was quite distressed that we tried to do what we did. I remember La Monte playing him John Coltrane and he was very taken with him, he could feel the enormous soul behind Coltrane's music. But I don't think he felt we were up to Coltrane's level. He thought probably we should have practised tuning the tambura and singing our scales instead of doing our own adventures." Although he was full of encouragement for Riley, who had contemplated giving up his own compositions in order to practise raga full time, most of his words of praise were fleeting. At the premiere of *The Well Tuned Piano* in Italy in 1974, he commented that Young had taken the traditional instrument of Europe and transformed it before their eyes. When Jon Hassell played him "Cherni" – his take on Raga Tilang, from *Possible Musics* Volume 4 – he simply said, "it was good". "That was a big moment for me," says Hassell. "That he could actually see how something could be taken and how his art could be absorbed and translated in another way. He was certainly expansive enough to understand how things grow and don't stay static. For him, forward and backward were the same. There was no avant garde." [ ] The *Tamburas Of Pandit Pran Nath* is out now on Just Dreams. *Midnight Ragas* will be issued later this year by the Cortical Foundation. For more information on Pran Nath, go to: [www.lamonteyoung.com](http://www.lamonteyoung.com), Full transcripts of the interviews conducted for this piece can be found on Marcus Boon's Website: [www.hungryghost.net](http://www.hungryghost.net)



## TANGENTS

IN THE 20 YEARS SINCE LESTER BANGS WROTE HIS "REASONABLE GUIDE TO HORRIBLE NOISE," THE MULTI-MEDIATED WORLD HAS LARGELY ASSIMILATED THE HOSTILE SOUNDS HE ESPOUSED. CONTRASTING BANGS'S AESTHETIC WITH JACQUES ATTALI'S NOISE, MARK SINKER WONDERES WHETHER NOISE CAN SURVIVE THE ENDLESS REVERSAL STRATEGIES THEIR FOLLOWERS HAVE DEVELOPED TO KEEP IT ALIVE

## LOUD BANGS AND BESTIAL NOISES

"You probably can't stand the stuff, but this stuff has its adherents (like me) and aesthetic (if you want to call it that)" — Lester Bangs, "A Reasonable Guide to Horrible Noise", *Village Voice*, 30 September 1981

Published exactly 20 years ago, Lester Bangs's "A Reasonable Guide To Horrible Noise" made a bid to pin down exactly what this new idea, music-as-noise, is: music so blaringly hostile-ugly that it's almost a public offence, and why people are committing themselves to making it, what he and others love in it, and maybe even why. And to make the point real he served up examples — Xenakis, "Sister Ray", P.L. rap — and a half-serious consumer guide to close...

What precisely made him want to write the piece no longer matters to the world, perhaps. Certainly it's not a detail of his life that clingy biographer Jim DeRogatis bothers boring us with. This may have been a piece named for one of Bangs's many life-work-summarizing book projects (all unfinished because none started), but it still only fetches up as one among many many titles in the large appendix to *Let It Blurt: The Life And Times Of Lester Bangs*, published last year. Which is to say, if "Reasonable Guide" ever threw around ideas as an essay — if Bangs ever threw around ideas as a writer — then readers of *Let It Blurt* will have to de-squelir them for themselves from the 40-odd exhaustive pages listing his complete published writings. From 225 interviews with friends, rivals, enemies, exes and passing pundits, DeRogatis

boils out only endless glum details of Lester's love-life, alco-binges, BO... As a book about a writer *Let It Blurt* sucks. Dividing the rockwrite world into Chinstrokers and Noiseboys (not to say thinkers and thugs), it elects the latter — notably the unholy trio of Bangs, Richard Meltzer and Nick Toiches — as the only real critics by definition. Why? How? What do they say or do? That you should think to ask demonstrates little but the academic wankiness and redundancy of that pink sac you call your brain, right?

Right. As DeRogatis says in his mission statement, there are the "two-thumbs-up consumer guide careerists who treat rock 'n' roll as mere entertainment and the academics who drain it of all the joy and fury", and then there's Bangs and "a joyous or cathartic roar and a defiant fuck-you to the bland and bullshit culture at large". So far, so easy target: Bangs was a Wild Thing; critics X and Y are not. Except some of the Noiseboys have a much more complex idea of this "fuck-you". As Bangs's co-conspirator Meltzer — renegade Yale philosophy student and sometime *Fluxus* acolyte — noted, writing about Elvis in *Crawdaddy* in 1969: "If you start with [illegitimacy as a big criterion for a song, like if it's loud and noisy and hurts your father's ear, then all you need is to think real hard about the illegitimacy of ballads to your ear and you got yourself some more noise illegitimacy, you take it where you find it, it's all usable, anything and its opposite."

Meltzer was injecting this self-tripping legit-illegit

flipflop into rock crit throughout the time he was compiling his murky, cheeky, intermittently unreadable *The Aesthetics Of Rock*, written between 1965-1970: you can pretend it didn't also shape Bangs's aesthetic, but you're kidding yourself. For DeRogatis, the main drain-it academic is Greil Marcus, responsible for de-roaring Bangs in his editing work on the 1987 collection *Psychotic Reactions And Carburetor Dung — The Work Of A Legendary Critic: Rock 'N' Roll As Literature And Literature As Rock 'N' Roll*. Here's a more likely reason, from the intro to that same book: "I double back all over myself," [Bangs] said in an interview with [DeRogatis], who had asked him if his approach to rock 'n' roll was based on the conviction that the music wasn't art. "We can talk about the trash aesthetic, all that... Of course it's art." Which those-who-drain (like me, say) may call Heradrian dialectics or negation or some such, and which thug-thinkers (to protect their street-image) refer to as jk-as.

At which point, let's quickly just meet this essay's secret comedy hero, Abraham Moles. His once-acclaimed, now forgotten 1958 socio-scientific study of art, *Théorie De L'Information Et Perception Esthétique*, inspired Bangs-con Xenakis (and disgusted the Situationists, who called Moles a "pinhead cybernetician"). Says Moles, neatly and inadvertently subversively: "A noise is a signal that the sender does not want to transmit" (and more generally) "A noise is a sound we do not want to hear".

Put it another way, doubling it back over itself, it





Your guide to horrible scenes: Lester Bangs in New York

reads: a bunch of stuff biales up off out the speakers, and something completely askew and exact surprises you, and you laugh. What's so great? The brilliance of the explanation that you the listener yourself supply is a perception you then happily project away from yourself: only the author-artist and I grasp this, we two against the stupid world...

On 29 April 1982, Bangs's musician friend Nancy Stillman discovered the writer dead in his apartment. On his record rack was *The Human League's Dare*, Lester had just bought the LP hit of that winter and it was actually still revelling, the needle cracking in the run-out groove when Stillman found his corpse. Just think, for a moment, of Bangs's own ambivalent hate-shaped fascination with the synthetic in its myriad forms; just relish this group name, this LP title, this rich, daft, hideous, unlikely coincidence. Now go write your own Bangs bio.

In 1985, Gilo Pontecorvo's faux documentary *Battle Of Algiers* ends with women in veils planting bombs and the colonists losing a war against the colonised. As the camera spirals out, utulation spreads across the city, in threatening celebration of a longed-for birth. In 1972, Claude Farello's anarchic post-68 comedy *Thermocore* ends somewhat more ambiguously, even sardonically, with a highrise and a policeman gutted, and the proletariat joyfully reverting to caveman cannibalism. The camera spirals out over Paris, as gleeful human wolfhows spread. The end of

all oppression is the end of all civilised restraint, including – clearly – civilised language... In 1977, confusing *Thermocore* with *Algiers*, Jacques Attali published *Bruits*, translated in 1985 as *Noise: The Political Economy Of Music*. By turns scholarly and idiotic, ingenious and fraudulent, *Noise* presents its political economy as "a succession of orders (in other words, difference) done violence by noises (in other words, the calling into question of differences) that are prophetic because they create new orders, unstable and changing".

Once upon a time (Attali's first stage, and about as historical as *Xena: Warrior Princess*), music – drums and pre-valve trumpets – announced Sacrifice: the ruling order's celebration/monopolisation of power (only the Rulers have the right to kill). Comes a day when such sacrifices manifest only in representation: the new bourgeois audience gathers to view an orchestra, an opera, a composer/conductor star, a concert hall spectacle. Here the ruling order's power to gather – polyphonic elaboration, as it happens – presents itself for civilised self-approval, high cult appreciation. [Yes: there are problems of definition here: is 'noise' really a satisfactory word for the emergence of polyphony, even if it did 'subvert' medieval priestcraft and the divine right of kings?]

So far so handily mythical, anyway: with a flurry of anecdotal quotation, Attali gives us exactly the flipflop we choose to hear – that civility is a fraud; that, rather than the *New Loud*, Quiet is and long has been the

mask for the Old Loud, as order covers for ancient bandit lawlessness. And provided we're not actually Wynton Marsalis, we'll be drawn to this story. Harmony remains what most people most enjoy in most music. In order to side with Today's Revolutionaries, you require most people to distrust and reject the very element that they most enjoy. So yes, clever indeed to coax them along with you by casting harmony as a once daring historical-aesthetic breakthrough. To set aside a designated romper room for reactionary pleasure: then no one need feel left out for secretly still digging Schubert.

The next flipflop, at the third historical stage, is cleverer still. Repetition, Attali argues, is where humanity emerged with the means to record. Now spectators no longer gather together; instead, individuals stockpile. Music, controlled by sound engineers and statistical analysts, becomes a one-way, chartbound monologue; the audience is silenced before the amp and programmed chatter. Desire is controlled, channelled, neutralised. In his own words, from the prospectus: " fetishised as a commodity, music is illustrative of the evolution of our entire society: denaturalise a social form, repress an activity of the body, specialise its practice, sell it as a spectacle, generalise its consumption, then see to it that it is stockpiled until it loses its meaning. Today music heralds – regardless of what the property mode of capital will be – the establishment of a society of repetition in which nothing will happen anymore. But



CIVILITY IS A FRAUD: RATHER THAN THE NEW LOUD, QUIET IS AND LONG HAS BEEN THE MASK FOR THE OLD LOUD, AS ORDER COVERS FOR ANCIENT BANDIT LAWLESSNESS

at the same time, it heralds the emergence of a formidable subversion, one leading to a radically new organisation never yet theorised, of which self-management is but a distant echo." This way whatever you like to hate (Albert Ayler, Public Enemy, Radiohead) is repetition monologue – monologue, so unlike a book, right? – and what you enjoy and others hate (Swans, Jungle, Destiny's Child) foretells the social mutation to come...

Not that Attali's spry conman's delivery stops here. The timing (1977/85) was masterful: written as punk was stirring, but arriving (in English) long after it, it simultaneously validated punk (as noise prophecy of social mutation to come) and validated itself (as written prophecy of noise mutation to come: punk). Attali's actual analysis of rock culture fails to anticipate any such development. In an afterword written long after the fact, feminist musicologist Susan McClary bravely covers up for Attali, more than somewhat bending his position in the process. But then anyone who reads beyond the title itself (the book's one travelling idea) has to do an awful lot of bending.

"My most memorable childhood fantasy was to have a mansion with catacombs underneath containing, alphabetised in endless winding dimly-lit dusty rows, every album ever released" – Lester Bangs, quoted in Greil Marcus's introduction to *Psychotic Reactions And Carburetor Dung*

In *Théorie De L'information*, earnest Abraham Moles picks away at a key cybernetic category polarity: "Originality vs Banality". With their usual genius for turning strong elements in a victim's output against itself, Guy Debord's Situationists took his 'banality' and threw it spitefully back at him. Less niftily, Attali tries to do the same to another Moles trope, "Signal vs Noise". In a section as boldly original as its title ("The Banalization Of The Message"), Attali claims that "the presence of debased songs in our environment has increased. Popular music and rock have been recuperated, colonised, sanitised. If the jazz of the 1950s was the refuge of a violence without a political outlet, it was followed by an implacable ideological and technical recuperation: Jimi Hendrix was replaced by Steve Howe, Eric Clapton by Keith Emerson... The singers of the 1950s are back in fashion in the 1970s, and today's children enjoy their parents' records." Last sentence? Not true – and so what if it was?

Attali's theory of commodification is merely boiled-up Baudrillard (*For A Critique Of The Political Economy Of The Sign*, itself only ever a pirate number on a market-tested Situationist line, Dig into anti-art artist Debord's deft schtick, and it's all subsurface reversal, anti-media tracts fuelled by cannibalised matter of distinct residual power, lifted straight from whatever it attacks. Debord's movies feed on cinema; his journals chew up newspapers and comic-books; his books vampirically suck the Euro-Ti classics dry.

His use-abuse gathers, digests, reorganises and vomits up that which has power compacted in it, that which has power over the gatherer, that which the vomitor is threatened by and so drawn to; and this is because the channelisation of desire doesn't neutralise or negate desire, any more than the channelisation of electricity neutralises or negates electricity. As with easteries, libraries of books and records store power.

The libraries you despise are actually the people who gathered them: records, books and people all commodities together. Yes, if you sneer at all storage, you can indeed declare that "rock" (the first music unashamedly to revel in its own plastic-fantastic materiality and low tradeable objecthood) means nothing new can ever happen. Bangs's childhood dream, of a cellarful of all recorded noise, does seem a fantasy of safe containment. It's a denial of the terror and pain the collector-fantasy can write into. I mean, compare Meltzer's astounding, torrential 1999 return to public attention, "Vinyl Reckoning", a hateful-hatefilled perspective-binned and rhy/happy tirade, in which mounting fury and disappointment are checked off against damaged and near-unplayable LPs as he hawks them from the shelves – the detailed howl of a betrayed man, deserted by his own offspring, his youthful hopes and strategies, his stuff.

Love is the trap. Betrayed by everything, everyone he ever loved: only a fool expects anything else. Hence the unspoken message which screams off the





Rockers in Detroit: Green founder Barry Kravitz, editor Dave Marsh and Lester Bangs

material – the unintended signal, inescapably compelling – love me, love the monster in me, the obsessive, angry, people-hating collector in me. Yes, he makes it viciously hard: he distrusts you for even liking him. OK, he alone sees past the leisure industry's illusion-mongering strategies to the infinite unchanging repetition of manufactured pop culture. Yay. To announce yourself the world's most undeluded is just an aggressive way of saying "I have no friends".

We got to the noise that the undeluded don't want to hear by going back to Bangs, of course. Bangs the fan-humanist, as perverse and anti-social as he often behaved, stepping back from the worst, the laziness, cowardice, malice, self-loathing, to say, yes, all these noises are what we share. No place to stand – no noise to embrace – which sets me and you, "us" and "them" on different planes. Hendrix rocked because he was "the refuge of a violence without a political outlet", says Attali, and ELP sucked because they weren't. Piffle, of course. Neither history or prophecy, this is just gutless hedging, adapted to punkoid taste orthodoxy. If the reader disagrees, they substitute whoever they choose according to the dictates of their particular taste orthodoxy.

But actually even this concedes too much to Attali's glazy generalisations. Let's be genuinely precise – let's connect Bangs to his Xenakis fandom. And let's first recall that noise emerged as an object of study not in acoustics or sociology, but in cybernetics; that

cybernetician Moles was Xenakis's colleague and inspiration; and that to most music lovers, Xenakis's book *Formalized Music* – charts, diagrams, page after page of hardcore algebra – is a much more horrible noise than his works blasted out loud, even *Hibiki-Hana-Ma*, with its 800 loudspeakers.

Of all the post-war composers, only Xenakis remotely understood the mathematics that grounds the physics of acoustics – how notes relate to noise, the role of chance in communication, the statistical nature of mass events, the relationship between the atom and mass, the drop and the cloud – as well as how computers translate information into digits, every message made up of signal and noise. Stockhausen's late 50s essays are dense with avant garde innovation and mathematical error. Yet right at the limit of his muddled understanding, he made his best music. Boulez never even finished his theoretical 1962 manifesto, *Music Today*, a bullshit masterpiece intended to undercut the rhetorical opposition of more recent science from his own crystalline pre-quantum aesthetics. Indeed, the strength of his music derives from its resistance to newly emergent material necessity. Unframed of science, Xenakis was the 50s composer exiled from the avant garde ascendancy of the day. Perhaps rightly. Perhaps his mathematically competent acceptance of the wise limits of the rationally possible/sensible can never quite deliver. Perhaps he stood off while the poorly informed blundered through, via fear and dodge and bluff and

ignorance, into actually new music, noise-as-music, sound as a (yes, limited) symbol of unrestrained freedoms yet to come. If unconscious attraction to hard science existed in the Darmstadt set, it was as contrast, not avatar – science as an unintelligible backdrop for the new music to stand bold and weird and precise against.

Attali's fourth and final stage – supposedly the lift-off into release and freedom – he bafflingly refers to as "Composition". Well, as lo-fi electronics improviser Gordon Mumma once said, "I consider that my designing and building of circuits is really 'composing'." The Xenakis blueprint for the Domsday Composing Machine, the global computer synth with presets for order and chaos, choice and chance, was a device that anticipated-encompassed everything, where scores-as-maps would morph into sound-process-circuits-as-maps would morph into recordings-as-maps. But nothing in the great Greek prophet's vision of his city of the future quite compares to the image of Bangs – Bangs as composer, you as composer – wandering New York with his little boombox, waging war on the roots of rap with *Demophones* or *Bohór*, turned up to 11. When intention is acknowledged as a two way fight, noise becomes signal, and signal becomes noise...

Plainly, the four pages of "A Reasonable Guide" deliver better writing than Attali's 150 odd pages – since when was that going to be a contest? But is it better thinking? If it's not what he says but how he



HE ALONE SEES PAST THE LEISURE INDUSTRY'S ILLUSION-MONGERING STRATEGIES TO THE INFINITE REPETITION OF MANUFACTURED POP CULTURE. TO ANNOUNCE YOURSELF THE WORLD'S MOST UNDELUDDED IS JUST AN AGGRESSIVE WAY OF SAYING "I HAVE NO FRIENDS"

says it, then no, this is not typical, classic Bangs, where he'd hurl himself into the heteroglossal vortex of his own mind, and we saw it working, doubling back all over itself – sometimes painfully – as he wrote. It is half consumer guide, half unexamined examples. But yes, there is thought-motion in the piece: a context is gently asserted, in which the obnoxious practices might be justified, politically, aesthetically, sociologically – and then just as gently backed away from. Yes, rap fans do play boomboxes hyperloud to fuck up whitey. Yes, St Mark's Place eatenies play Teenage Jesus And The Jerks so SoHo bohos can feel at home. Horrible Noise: war with your neighbours, chilling with your friends – or vice versa, perhaps. The starting point of "Reasonable Guide" is a joke about Lydia Lunch (the diners realise "Orphans" is playing on the jukebox: "Enjoy your food, foal!" chuckles someone present). How cool would it be if the actual entire reason for the "Guide" – after all, it was Pigluck's founding gesture – was just to retell this anecdote?

"6. I have heard this record characterised as 'anti-human' and 'anti-emotional'. That it is, in a sense, since it is music made more by tape recorders, amps, speakers, microphones and ring modulators than any set of human hands and emotions. But so what? Almost all music today is anti-emotional and made by machines too... Besides which, any record which sends listeners fleeing the room screaming for

surcease of aural flagellation or, alternately, getting physical and disturbing your medications to the point of breaking the damn thing, can hardly be accused, at least in results if not original creative man-hours, of lacking emotional content..." – Lester Bangs on Metal Machine Music, "The Greatest Album Ever Made, Just In Case You Wondered", Creem, March 1976

As it happens, there is a plausible candidate for the event that inspired the "Reasonable Guide". In June 1981 at White Columns art centre, Spring Street, NYC, a young Thurston Moore had curated the nine day Noise Fest. Little survives today besides a rare-as-phlegm's-teeth tape (Noise Fest, 20 Muse 5), featuring a nascent Sonic Youth, Rudolph Grey's Blue Humans, and Borbetomagus, with a scad of other No Wave and post-No Wave groups that didn't even make it into the 90s, let alone out.

With Michael Gohs, Bangs had drawn up a book proposal in 1980: Rock Gomorrah, a never-started collection of "every verifiable incidence of piglucking in the 25 year history of rock 'n' roll". By the late 80s, an entire Pigluck Nation had formed itself, truculent underground child of Bangs and Attali, punk regionalism and No Wave, a malicious anti-harmony post-everything prankster scene chronicled in a dark mulch of proto-desktop zines: Option, Sound Choice, Factsheet Five, Maximum Rock'n'Roll, Forced Exposure, Chemical Imbalance. But even as it seemed to strive to put Bangs's Wild Rumpus into horrible-

noise effect, there was something fanatically unBangsian, something dutiful and enervating and pedantic and ungenerous about the Pigluck Nation. It makes a noise, yes, but it's not that cathartic or defiant. Rather it's a distrustful self-isolated milieu where strengths had to be draped in clumsily disguising ugliness. It has also become the final magazine space open to surviving Noiseboys Meltzer and Tosches. But here they wrote by rote, ungratefully and unconvincingly. When the occasional Pigluck icon (The Butthole Surfers, say) clambered towards wider energy, glamour, intelligence and the embrace of the mass-cult world, the Pigluck Nation would convulse into uncritical support or envious resistance – as if to be astonishing to yourself was to sell out. Refusal had simply become the complacent non-motion of 'the world is crap because we feel crap'. Any mass-shared material to be used/abused – the material with power, the noise that a Pigluckier didn't want to hear – was now set at such a sneering kneejerk distance that when Grunge wiped it all away, the most common response was one of relief.

Because here's what a bogus history à la Xens evades: if the Sacred Noise of times past were an official carnival moment – a licensed time to bleed heads of pressured steam and oppressed stress – where does that leave Pigluck Days? Noise is always now: move on past, it becomes art, or dust. It has no history. Sometimes noise just sounds like noise: noise intended ain't noise at all, but signal. Colour, or





context, or just unanchored something...

And punk didn't violate rock 'n' roll, it rescued it. No Wave wasn't the anti-Elvis, but the Return of the King in his relevant obnoxious essence. To the Bangs generation, true disruption – music without redeeming aspect – wasn't Pigfuck, it was disco. Indeed, to some of this generation, this was disco's value. And disco's real gift was sometimes just that it was there if you wanted it, or there to walk away from and ignore. Like the classical philosophy Meltzer once uncovered in The Pom-Tails and Frankie Avalon (so much for infinite unchanging repetition). Like the sheer idiotic unrepeating range of music ideas thrown up and then just thrown away in Prog Rock: no one noticed, no one cared. So it's all still there, waiting: unspooled by self-importance. The thing that's just there with Metal Machine Music, is that it's the prettiest music Lou ever made: because he just left his robots to it.

"Noise" the Theory is incapable of distinguishing between Nina Canal, Sonny Sharrock, Hans Reichel, Stefan Jaworzyn, Jad Fair, Donald Miller, Pat Place, Keiji Haino or Justin Broadrick. Nor can it navigate from Glitchcore to Japaneuro to Sludge-Death: a territory with fars and nears, highs and lows, softs and hards, a right and a left, a true and false, a further up and a further in...

"If love," wrote Bangs in his Village Voice Elvis obit, "truly is going out of fashion forever, which I do not believe, then along with our nurtured indifference to

each other will be an even more contemptuous indifference to each other's objects of reverence."

And also: "He was the only male performer I have ever seen to whom I responded sexually; it wasn't real arousal, rather an erection of the heart, when I looked at him I went mad with desire and envy and worship and self-projection."

In the 20 years since he wrote "A Reasonable Guide", the walls of wild thing Bangs's perverse antisocial humanism became the world all around. On the dark floor of the Web, obsessive libraries of crazed rot mushroom. Noise has won: it is the culture at large. "If you start with legitimacy as a big contaminant for a song," wrote Frank Kogan only in *Why Music Sucks* #13 earlier this year, "like if it's 'meaning' laden and pseudo-intellectual and impresses the teacher's pets who write for the Village Voice, then all you need is to think real hard about the legitimacy of silly noise rants to your ear, and you've got yourself some more legitimacy: all is polluted and destroyed, anything and its opposite. Except that Meltzer's never admitted to himself that he has anything to do with this legitimizing process."

"17. It is the greatest record ever made in the history of the human eardrum. Number Two: Kiss Alive!" – Bangs on Metal Machine Music, Creem, March 1976

The sweetest recollection of Lester Bangs is found in Cameron Crowe's semi-autobiographical movie *Almost*

Famous, in which the schoolkid rock-crit (ie former Rolling Stone writer Crowe) sets up an altar to the idea of the utterly independent, non-starfucking, say anything, break-loose joumo as great crazee guy (ie Bangs), then becomes (as all agree) a likeable industry shill who gives The Eagles copy approval. Meltzer, commenting on this movie in the *San Diego Reader*, affects outrage at this misuse-misgrasp of his old buddy Bangs, but is strangely ambivalent about the nature of the misgrasp: on one hand, how could this shill worship that never-captured rogue (how can noise be mistaken for signal?); on the other, Bangs, the old clown, was the biggest, most deluded shill of all (it was signal all along, and never noise).

The Noiseboy's mind moves, in agony, towards the thought he doesn't yet face: If his records stopped fighting, then it's just him that changed, not them. If you fall out of love with all the world, it ain't always all the world's fault. If you don't take out your own trash, sometimes it takes you out. □

Lester Bangs's *Psychotic Reactions And Carburetor Dung* is republished this month by *Serpent's Tail*. See *Print Run*, page 81



# Charts

Playlists from the outer limits



Making a pile: These Records, London

## These Fantasy Covers 15

**Magma**  
Queen's "Johannes Rhapsody"  
**Michael Gira**  
Neil Diamond's "Love On The Rocks"  
**Charles Hayward**  
The Smiths' "The Charming Man"  
**Tortoise**  
"Theme From The Deerhunter"  
**The Residents**  
Bibi Saint-John's "Upstream Girl"  
**Blök**  
Judy Garland's "Somewhere Over The Rainbow"  
**Captain Beheart And His Magic Band**  
David Bowie's "Sound And Vision"  
**Scavari**  
Paul Handcocker's "Hemlock"  
**Augustus Pablo**  
Mike Clifford's "Tubular Bells"  
**Coli**  
Pat Shop Boys' "It's A Sin"  
**The Fall**  
Alan Price's "Simon Smith And His Amazing Dancing Bear"  
**The John Coltrane Quartet**  
Jethro Tull's "Living In The Past"  
**Jean-Hervé Pharo**  
Nicolle Ann "They're Coming To Take Me Away, Hey Hey"  
**Aphele Tels**  
Pink Floyd's "The Gnome"  
**Adam Tempest Riot**  
Slade's "Get On For The Horse"

Compiled by These Records, 112 Brook Drive, London SE11 4TD, these@appleonline.net

## Missing Records 15

**Acid Mothers Temple**  
New Generators: Worlds (Squash)  
**OSCAR**  
Remember When We Used To Put EP (Optima)  
**Steve Reid**  
Nova (Root Jazz)  
**No Forcelfield**  
John Rocco Redemption Clause 12" (Sims)  
**Alan Silva**  
Alan Silva And The Celestial Orchestra (Get Back)  
**Ridgely**  
Clubbed To Death 7" (Tigerbait: 6)  
**Bartam Rooster**  
Fuck All Y'all (Sympathy For The Record Industry)  
**Yos Roudine**  
It Came From Japan 3" (Sympathy For The Record Industry)  
**Roro**  
Image (Incidental Music)  
**Abdullah Hameed**  
Programme 2 7" (Keytones)  
**Pantheon**  
The Director's Cut (Special)  
**Felix De Housselle**  
Krisna And The Gilt City Rockers (Diyrock)  
**Buck 65**  
Man Overboard (Unicorn)  
**The Gap-Gators**  
Pound Down (Sympathy For The Record Industry)  
**MT Vernon Arts Lab**  
The Season At Hill's Lane (Jewel)

Compiled by John and 'Wier' Mark, Missing Records, 685 Great Western Road, Glasgow, G12 8RA, email Missing\_Glasgow@btinternet.com

## Wedding Music 15

**Sparks**  
New: Turn Your Back On Mother Nature 7" (Island)  
**Derek Bailey**  
Notes (Jaxus)  
**Rikio Corio**  
Miva Phrodo (RTB)  
**Silvers**  
Nova Alexandria (Torres)  
**Empire Kavalas**  
Kama Kama (Ryffar)  
**V/V/V**  
Pig 7" (N/Y/N)  
**Stock,hausen & Wellman**  
Broccoli 7" (Hor Air)  
**Kiss**  
Alive II (Mercury)  
**Schickel**  
Chorus Max Single (Demot)  
**Rediculous**  
Kid A (EMI) (Parlophone)  
**Pat Shop Boys**  
Very (EMI) (Parlophone)  
**Amende Leer**  
Sweet Revenge (Analog)  
**Cassius Hansen & Mawelle**  
Driestest Just Tar Sweet (Nata Avingua)  
**Jean Louis Cortes**  
Enfant Choral (Radio Borgard)  
**Osama Yoshida New Jazz Quintet**  
Fluxus (Tzadik)  
**Mirwale**  
Proletariat (Herm)

Compiled by Rediculous's Noit Alekht and Margelene Blazonska for their wedding, August 2001

## The Office Ambience

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Solid Steel Presents... (Naps Tunt)  
**DU/Rupture**  
Gold Teeth That (Good)  
**Eddie Pezzani**  
Saba Gaba's De N'York (Neacoma)  
**Jackie O Motherfucker**  
Licensor (Road Cone)  
**WIM**  
New Features (Fat Cat)  
**Rigg Jax**  
Pantolon Rhymes (Subversive)  
**Tara Jane O'Hell**  
In The Sun Lines (Quarterstick)  
**Derek Bailey & Eddie Prevost**  
Oss (Analog)  
**Karivum**  
Soft Electric Line!  
**Various**  
Ongwa Of Guitar Music, Southern Congo & Northern Zambia 1950-58 (SWAP)  
**Stephan Mawelle**  
Inequity (Rizoma)  
**Gains Cage**  
Gloss Cage (Postarch)  
**Phonocyclographix & The Filthy Age**  
Mooch The Mouse: Snacks Dealer To The Stars (Grist)  
**Swisskisside Newkoush**  
Strengers Against Architecture 1991-2001 (Mute)  
**Various**  
Pathhouse Revolution: King Tubby's Productions In The Digital Era (Pressure Sounds)

Compiled by The Wire Sound System

We welcome charts from record shops, radio shows, DJs, readers, etc. Email editor@these.co.uk





# Reviews



PHOTO: WICK WHITE

Alex Schlippenbach reviewed in Soundcheck

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# Soundcheck

This month's selected CDs, albums and singles

## ACID MOTHERS TEMPLE & THE MELTING PARASO UFO NEW GEOCENTRIC WORLD

SQUEALER/USA CD  
BY JULIAN COWLEY

With this release on Massachusetts label Squealer, Acid Mothers Temple beckon again to America. OK, beckon may not be the word, given the nature of "Psycho Buddha", the 21 minute master that opens New Geocentric World. The track is an invitation to dissolve in a seething cosmic cauldron kept at a rolling boil by guitarist Makoto Kawabata, drummer Yoshimitsu Ichinoku and their enigmatic core Imagine Gong. Howland and Anton Döhl II joining forces to emulate the wit of fire intensity of John Dobbins's Ascension and you're in the vicinity. Rhapsodies are in their too.

After that onslaught the record unfolds like a polychromatic primer, new material seemingly designed to appease newcomers of the kinds of mind reeling and blessed out rips to be found in The Acid Mothers' PSF back catalogue: stars, space whispers, Heavy Metal, acoustic distortion and cerebral glassiness. Aesthetically stunning augmented with electronic gurgling, cosmic echo and mock harmonium, and a prolonged multibanded delay to conclude All this and Grace Sick style incantatory vocals from guest Haco on "You're Still New Near Me Every Time". Acidemics might not consider this a great Acid Mothers Temple record, but for the uninitiated it's potentially a source of revelation. The music is unmistakably a self-conscious concoction, knowingly distilled from the baroque indulgences of psychedelia's first wave. Still, it has the seductiveness of dream logic, where sharp edges melt and essences merge, taking excess as their point of departure. This Japanese pop music collective have made the signature artifice of psychedelia rock the very substance of its music, clustering ornamental heakery into something that transcends parody and appears durable.

## LAURIE ANDERSON LIFE ON A STRING

NONESUCH PROCD00384 CD  
BY ANNE HILDE NESBIT

For the last two years multimedia Laurie Anderson has been tearing the saga of Moby Dick as a grand electronic opus. Always interested in storytelling, and with a special fascination for the Big Stories, Anderson is first and foremost a performance artist, looking to find the essence of a narrative somewhere in the intersection between imagery, spoken word, light and music. Her first album since 1995, *Life on a String* was originally intended as a collection of songs from the Moby Dick tour, but by then Anderson had tired of being in the 19th century and, as a consequence, the album contains mostly new material, with only three of its 12 tracks coming from the Moby Dick project.

The first track, "One White Whale", makes it immediately clear that this is a large scale production. A monumental organ drone is interspersed with a heavily echoed four-folk chant constructed under the slow, majestic thumps of a kettledrum. It makes for an inflated opening. Fans of Anderson's trademark spoken word phrasing, with pregnant pauses, raised eyebrows and question mark endings, won't be disappointed. "Pieces And Parts" opens with the line, "They say that in 1842, on a plantation in Alabama, the slaves unearthed a huge skeleton, the bones of a giant whale", in a twee voice that bears an unfortunate resemblance to a nursery school teacher. On "Dark Angel", she adopts a different storyteller persona, Broadway entertainer. She narrates a finger clicking question and answer dialogue, drowning in a sea of heavy orchestration, but that's the lowest point. "My Compensation" makes for a sick yet engaging love song. Further, with its distorted vocals and Anderson's purred voice hearing the words "I love your brain", it's the only track to retain some of the intimacy and clarity of early works such as "O Superman" and "Lust X-X".

Alongside the album's principal musical director — composer/producer/entrepreneur Hal Willner and Icelandic bassist and composer Suck Swenson — a diverse list of guests includes Dr John, Lou Reed, Bill Fissell, Erik Friedlander, Peter Scherer, Mitchell Forman, Joey Baren, Moscov Warkar, Danyel Finkel and orchestra Van Dyke Parks. They make for a curious and interesting ensemble, but like a faceless crew working a big ship, their roles are never clear. Anderson could surely have managed better alone on a smaller vessel. Large projects such as *United States and Stories* from The Nerve Bible have repeatedly proved that she finds strength in solitude. She may be pursuing the perfect expression of the Big Idea but, like Melville's *Ahab*, with Moby Dick she's in danger of being consumed by the object of her chase.

## AMM TUNES WITHOUT MEASURE OR END

MATCHLESS MRC044 CD  
BY DAVID KEZMAN

Featuring the first new AMM material in five years, *Tunes Without Measure Or End* is drawn from their appearance at the Evan Pinker-curated *Free Radicals* event in Glasgow last year. The cover features a photograph of the 1943 edition of Scots poet Hugh MacDiarmid's autobiography *Lucky Poet* taken by Scottish artist Jim Hamill. The MacDiarmid connection makes sense. Influenced by James Joyce's *Ulysses*, he wrote in a "synthetic Scots" that combined various dialects with folk songs and cultural allusion to create his own expressive and idiosyncratic language. AMM have been doing the same for sound for 36 years.

*Tunes Without Measure...* is classic AMM in that it's instantly recognisable as AMM and yet unlike anything else they've done before. The atmosphere is fairly gentle, slightly unsettling, with the trio of guitarist Keith Rowe, drummer Eddie Prevost and pianist John Tilbury drifting through melancholy, sometimes nostalgic sounds that dredge up secret childhood memories and frozen moments. Prevost provides the most movement, with little luminous sparkles of cymbal work, while Rowe makes extensive use of his shortwave radio. At one point he picks up a bobolinked Radio 1 DJ in manic midstream. In the midst of all this funeral grandeur the DJ sounds, well, pointless. In another great moment, the group rise and sustain a wave of roaring static, only for an advertisement for "easy classics" on Classic FM to fly through the fog.

The disc's big surprise is pianist John Tilbury. I don't remember him coming through so powerfully on the night — not so much in terms of sound as in ideas — but listening back he's at great form as he strides through the performance. On "Love Six" (the music is actually continuous) he plays a beautiful two chord pattern that sounds as primitively perfect as Michael Rotter's motor piano on *New! 75*. The way Tilbury comes from here ports up the difference between listening to AMM live and on record. With Prevost roaring round the great barrels of his kit and Rowe attacking his table full of gadgets, they're always great to watch. But paradoxically for a music founded on spontaneity, it takes repeat listenings to get on intimate terms with it.

## DEREK BAILEY & EDDIE PREVOST ORE

ARRIVAL/ARND CD

## DEREK BAILEY & NOEL AKCHOTE CLOSE TO THE KITCHEN (LONDON GUITAR DUOS AUGUST 96)

BLUE CHIPMORTS BOX CD

BY JOHN CRATCHLEY

Derek Bailey's collaborative promiscuity is legendary and his commitment to obsolete open-mindedness is a constant to be enshrined. His game plan is not results oriented, thankfully, but both of these recorded by-products of lively improvised engagement are glorious. Epitomising their respective schools of free improv, Bailey and Prevost transcend the discipline and integrity that underpins their art, yet they have never recorded together as a duo.

Don Givens's sleeve notes to *Ore* make much of the search for a shared vocabulary derived from separate dialects. A visual metaphor may provide a niter vein of exploration. It isn't so much about musical language interacting as

about contact through musical gesture. The results are almost alchemical, producing textures from sound that is clammier than tactile. This isn't to debate either musician's range of vocabulary but merely to perceive the connection between them at a far more fundamental level. You might expect some kind of primeval simplicity in their playing from this description, yet you will find painstaking finesse in this meeting of remarkable men.

Eight tracks give the nominal identity of elements in the penodic table examine different facets of both players' idiosyncratic. Bowled cymbals resonate under blossoming guitar swells of single plucked strings or stroked chords producing an Orientalist quetude to the beginning of "Bismuth", demanding that you listen as intently to the pools of silence created between the ebb and flow. A delicate percussive scrape elicits an equally precise guitar scratch, yet momentum is never lost and the rhythmic pulse is never present. A nagging allusion goes as Bailey's guitar injects volume only to be cut off by a cello struck back tone from Prevost, who delicately introduces a patting tom-tom abstraction, filling a sound like into which Bailey's windpipes fall. This level of connection is gradually intuitive rather than linguistically manufactured. It is also achingly beautiful.

If *Ore* is the perfect multifaceted diamond of the pair, then the Bailey/Akchote recording (first released as an LP on Grubbs, now reappearing on David Grubbs's *Blue Chipmorts* imprint) is its roughcut cousin. Akchote employs an array of techniques with less restraint than Bailey, eager to come up to the mark. A lesser musician might have been tempted into a scrap to cast Akchote as the pretender to the throne. Bailey's response to such prodigious ferocity, however, is a complete and unequivocal embrace. While not exhibiting the contemplative intensity of *Ore*, *Close To The Kitchen* has a compelling urgency in its need to demonstrate its wares. Akchote is a natural extrovert, and Bailey's more atypical regimen is happy to play foil to his confident posture. The results are less integrated but just as valid.

## THEO BLECKMANN ORIGAMI

SINGLES/SGI1554 CD  
BY ANDY HAMILTON

The delicate, floating, gauzy settings and rich, obliquely virtuosic vocalising on *Origami* show a further progression in the artistry of Theo Bleckmann. Born 1966, he was a protégé of jazz singer Sheila Jordan. He has since worked with Anthony Braxton, Dave Douglas, Philip Glass and Beng On A Can, and is now a member of The Merce Cunningham Orchestra. *Origami* builds on Bleckmann's earlier *Songlines* collaboration with guitarist Ben Mendelsohn, 1997's *No Box*, which also featured folkloric bassist Suck Swenson.



## STEREOLAB SOUND-DUST

DUOPHONIC ULTRA-HIGH-FREQUENCY DISKS OUAH27 CD

Stereolab have a deep and abiding love not just for the noise that music makes but for the names that get attributed to it as well. Even the handle chosen for their record label gives off the graphic impression that the electrification of musical forms somehow speaks for itself. From the ensemble's first formative collection, *Peng*, in 1992 through 1995's *Music For The Amorphous Body* (Study Centre), 1997's *Dots And Loops*, 1998's *Aluminum Tunes* and 1999's *Cobra And Phases* (Group Play Voltage In The Milky Night), there's a strong sense that everything Stereolab undertake essentially transforms itself into an act of self-definition. What you're about to hear is what you get, and so it goes with *Sound-Dust*.

Or does it? A selection of songs so painstakingly buffed and burnished until every surface has been brought to an unblemished gloss is not the natural habitat for collapse and decay. Even the perkily structured periodicity of the opener, "Black Ants In Sound-Dust", reminiscent of Terry Riley's in *C*, feels like it's had the benefits of Mr Dyson's Dual Cyclone Technology run over it. Recorded mostly in Chicago, with John McEntire and Jim O'Rourke handling production, Stereolab's latest approximation of the pop ideal is so polished that everything now gets reflected

back off it. The weird trick with mirrors, of course, is the way background and foreground suddenly becomes confused in them: the two are no longer kept rigidly apart. In the same way, such compositions as "Baby Lulu" and "Space Moth" feel like they have been deliberately constructed in order to blend in with their immediate surroundings. Tim Gane and Laetitia Sadier's compositional techniques are sharper than ever, but the restless, untidy experimentalism of *Cobra And Phases* has been replaced by a mania for neatness and order. Nothing strays much outside the middle range, be it tone, tempo, sound balance or production values. Events seem to occur at a steady pace and with level measure – even when they obviously don't. The overall effect of such carefully processed listening pleasure is to numb the senses. Unwilling to impinge upon the memory, songs begin to merge with each other. Mary Hansen and Laetitia Sadier's vocal delivery have reached such levels of sweet transparency that they no longer appear to be singing in any discernible language known to humanity. The lyrics of "Suggestion Diabolique" and "Les Bons Bons Des Raisons" flirt casually with possible meanings, but are way too cool to come out and actually declare an intention.

A sense of what is missing can be found on "Long Life Love", one of three tracks released as a single, along with a truncated version of "Captain Easychoy" taken from the current album. A nonsense fairytale of

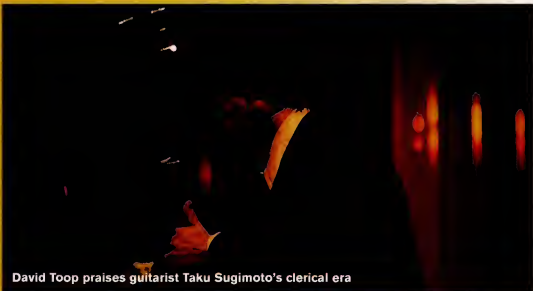
a song with a continually mutating melody line, "Long Life Love" can't keep still for one second, messily keeping electronic keyboards, mamba and drums in constant motion without allowing them ever to collide with each other. It's only with the unexpected interruptions taking place politely towards the background on "Hallucines" that a similarly wayward feel for the unexpected is aroused. Sudden little surprises, like the occasional electronic bang, crash or whistle, really stand out in such pristine surroundings.

Sean O'Hagan, taking time out once again from The High Llamas, continues to work small miracles with his arrangements: there's a remarkable amount of minute detail etched into every track, and moments of transition worked into each song that both refresh and give pause. In their own way, they're all quite perfect, and that's where the problem lies. There's everything to like about this release, but nothing to grip or to engage the senses; nothing, in short, to hang on to. Stereolab are a remarkable group, and we'd all be considerably the poorer without them, but they have now defined and refined themselves to a point where they are almost invisible. It would have been great if there had been a few grains of sound-dust blowing through this venture, or a small colony of black ants nibbling away at its edges. Anything of beauty must have its flaw. Otherwise we are stuck with only the tedium of purity, the monotony of perfection. □

**Ken Hollings pines for  
specks of sound-dust in  
the vacuum of  
Stereolab's perfection**







## David Toop praises guitarist Taku Sugimoto's clerical era

**TAKU SUGIMOTO**  
ITALIA  
A BRUIT SECRET BY CD

Just as you're about to go on stage to perform your improvisation for damp leaves, aarated confetti and contrabass bed socks at the Tunnel, Milan, you realise that the entire audience has rediscovered the lost art of conversation. What to do? The options are limited. You can stalk out to the microphone, deliver a tight-arsed lecture on the sandrity of your art and demand total hush. This will result in poor reviews and a severely alienated bunch of potential fans. You can sing a bunch of songs they all love, though Atomic Kitten's greatest hit played on damp leaves may lack the necessary lift that the occasion demands. Alternatively, wrench the PA knobs round to 11, why not, and blast them with an hour of unbroken, consciousness shredding noise. Consequence? Their chatter will at least be crushed, though they may adjourn to the nearest bar to resume verbal intercourse. Or you can play really, really, really quietly, in the hope that your whispers will spread stealthily through the room like fairy dust. Sometimes, this works, though when it doesn't, you're in big trouble.

Extreme noise terror is a purifying balm, a rent in the fabric of the universe, a transgression against the forces of conservatism, corporeal denial and suppressed psychic energies. Yes, we know all that. But the truth is, playing brutally loud music is quite easy. Exhausting, perhaps, and disastrous for the ears in later life, but not in the same league of difficulty as playing really, really, really quietly. Playing on the threshold of silence can turn your body into a war zone of cramps and tremors, provoke clumsiness and mental panic, push your concentration levels beyond all previous limits, expose every flaw of structure and execution and finally turn a docile audience into a howling mob.

Listening to Taku Sugimoto's latest CD of solo guitar improvisations recorded live in Bologna and Milan, I am wondering how he does it. At first, I assumed these pieces were recorded direct from the mixing desk with none of the ambient room sound mixed in. Either that, or there was no audience present at either gig. I'm sure zero public wasn't the case, given Taku's currently high rating in certain circles. Then, listening on headphones with the volume way up, I can hear all sorts of little noises – chair creaks, amplifier hum, clothes rustling, somebody shifting in their seat, the odd explosion of something dropped. At one point, a buzzer is pressed, followed by the sound of somebody standing up to deal with the intrusion, trying to be as discrete as possible.

What I'm really wondering, about how he does it, is how he sustains this kind of poised over lengthy periods of time, how he holds an audience in a state of suspended expectation, drawing them into his microworld of partial gestures and exploratory calm without unleashing a battery of coughing and walkouts. There's a surface tension, like liquid quivering above the rim of a cup. Break the surface, just with a breath, and everything spills. The miracle is, the break doesn't come, yet Taku's playing never feels tight, fearful, flustered or aimless. It's a lot more difficult than it sounds.

What I was also beginning to wonder is where some of the Japanorama generation were going to go next. Minimalism, reductionism, whatever you want to call it, clears the air of too much complexity and unfocused crap. Then what? Ask Phil Glass, that's one possibility for learning what not to do. Musicians come up with a new twist, record for all the labels and gig around the world. As flavour of the year, Mr or Mrs Zeitgeist, they are forced to deliver twice nightly, whether their music is suited to it or not. Too many albums in a short space of time and suddenly it's all minor variations on the same riff.

My feeling about Taku is that he could play 365 days a year without losing his integrity or exhausting his talent, but for the listener, maybe there should be something a bit special about giving up to his spell. This new album, recorded in November and December 2000, opens up new areas for him. The melodic clarity and movement of *Opposite* and *Myshkin Music* have become implicit, now only sensed through broken chains of blunted notes, softly hammered trills, faint slides, brief swarms of feedback hum, subtle distortion, minute scratches and queasy bent pitches. Whereas the early albums were a little bit like Jim Hall playing Bill Evans in the ballad style of Lester Young, now I hear a closer relationship to Derek Bailey's playing of the early 1970s. Keith Rowe must be an influence, but I also hear personal reminders of Roger Smith, whose music over the years has explored tangential melody lines within improvised structures, mixed with the fugitive, peripheral sounds that emerge from guitar played in tranquil solitude. The paradox of Smith's playing is that extreme agitation can progress towards total insensibility. Sugimoto's playing also has its moments of upheaval, but the range in which he works is so precisely mapped, so circumscribed, that it's possible to read him as a kind of cleric of the electric guitar. I hear his playing as a branch of noise music. It just happens to be very quiet, strikingly beautiful and very carefully measured in its placement within silence. Maybe that's the wrong way to say it, since there is no point in distinguishing between environmental near-silence and the relative silences that constitute elements of order within his performance. I wouldn't be at all surprised to find him turning this oymoron of quiet noise music upside down within the next few years and go back to playing extremely noisy music. Loud, quiet, active, inactive, whatever he does will always be somehow secret and mysterious. That's a huge part of the appeal. A secret noise. □



John Hollenbeck now replaces Jim Black on drums, and Matt Merin is added on vibraphone, while the singer sometimes accompanies himself on piano.

For this more ambitious project, Beckmann works with a wider range of material, drawing on Ambient, noise and free improv as well as jazz. In addition to his own thoughtful compositions, he offers moving transformations of Guillaume De Machaut's 'Oseme Dame Jole', and the poignant 'The Dan Western Redemptor' from Esler and Breen's *Hollywood Songbook* — though for emotional impact this can't match Matthias Goeke's interpretation on Deca.

The singer's approach to standards has always been sideways on, but on 'I Remember You', with its TripHop stuttering, it's even more distanced and subversive. The basis for one of Charlie Parker's glorious late improvisations, that song was destroyed by 60s Australian yodeller Frank Field, while the other standard here, 'Life Is Just A Bowl Of Cherries', was a hit for the jazz-oriented 60s vocal group The Hi-Los. Beckmann is no mean yodeller himself, albeit an artistic one. Multitracking occasionally creates a duet effect and the singing is often falsetto. Otherwise vocalising tricks are used with more restraint than before. An excellent release by a remarkable singer.

# OLIVIA BLOCK MOBIUS FUSE

SEDIMENTAL, 031 CD

BY JULIAN COWLEY

Chicagoan Olivia Block made her debut on Sedimental with *Pure Gaze* in 1999. This sequel, assembled over the course of five years starting in December 1997, is a similarly meditative and surprising 30 minute mix of environmental sounds, unobtrusive electronic enhancements and precisely placed instrumental passages. Like Luc Ferrari, Block knows how to draw seductive music from the blending of such elements, making creative interventions in the natural world, casting enigmatic shadows across familiar ground. Both releases are effectively self-portraits, showing Block caught up in a momentous task of listening and composing, discovering and deliberating. She acts as a gateway for the found sounds of indoor and open spaces, birds and insects, crackling ice, fireworks and the wind buffeting her microphone, which are captured and relocated. Once caught suggestively between

raw and processed states, their identity is complicated. Block uses silence effectively, it oozes in and out of the predominantly quiet sounds that form the music. Her electronic interventions merge with the field recordings, and often the two become indistinguishable. The carefully organised sounds of a wind quartet, including Joe Bishop on trombone, carry associations of a social world, and although insidiously drowning on the borders of the electronic zone, the group are ultimately heard playing a slow, disguised tune, saturated with contravert values and confronted against a firework display in a way that Charles Ives would surely have appreciated. At which point it seems appropriate to press 'play' and light out for the territory once more.

# BOXHEAD ENSEMBLE TWO BROTHERS

ATYASTIC AP131 CD

BY TOM RIDGE

The previous Boxhead Ensemble release, *The Last Place To Go*, was a live, improvised soundtrack to a documentary film, the music generated by a collective of musicians including Will Osham and Ken Vandemark. Two Brothers returns a loose, sparse-sounding improvised feel, though musical director Michael Krassner has made changes to the core collective. Introducing other musicians, such as Wilco's Jeff Tweedy, he reshuffles his cast to produce variations in the music.

Primarily the sound is based around guitar and strings, combining mournful American folk themes with austere, neoclassical minimalism and noisy dissonance. For all its improvised qualities, *Two Brothers* is very much structured like a soundtrack, with successive pieces fitting in thematically with the whole; yet each one possesses its own momentum. The album begins with crackling noise and atonal scoping before a loose, jazzy rhythm is established. A mournful guitar twangs isolated clusters of notes which sound lazily indistinct against a sparse backdrop. The combination of rhythm and fractured melody is paradoxically as fluid as it is hesitant. For a moment, the music threatens to trail off into abstraction, only to be rescued by the smallest fragment of lyrics. Later, an isolated cello unites a melody against Tweedy's burbling guitar atonality, which evolves into a jagged feedback. In as much as anything here can be called typical, these examples tell you

something of the tightrope walking act enacted by the collective under Krassner's direction.

# JOHN CAGE FOUR4

OGREGRESS NO NUMBER CD

# JOHN CAGE THREE2, TWENTY THREE, SIX, TWENTY SIX

OGREGRESS NO NUMBER CD

# JOHN CAGE ONE5, ONE10

OGREGRESS NO NUMBER CD

# JOHN CAGE COMPLETE PIANO MUSIC VOLUME 6: PIECES 1960-1992

MDG SCENE MDG6130791 CD

# JOHN CAGE SONATAS AND INTERLUDES

PIRNING PI1010 CD

BY PHILIP CLARKE

There's a famous photograph of John Cage pictured outside the Harmonie Cafe in Paris with a look of amused irony on his face. Schoenberg had told him that he had no feeling for harmony and Cage took this on the chin, pushing against what he considered to be the manipulative game of European composition. At first hearing, Cage's 'number pieces', which he started in 1987 and worked on until his death in 1992, might seem to be extreme idiosyncrasies as beautifully voiced chords imperceptibly drift in and out of focus. Cage's writing certainly feels as though it is conceived harmonically. But it is, in fact, the case?

Well, it's certain Cage wouldn't have passed any academic music theory exam, but his 'number pieces' represent the most radical rethink of the very stuff of harmony. Cage was an anarchist interested in the spiritualism of Zen Buddhism, and the hierarchies and conflicts of Western harmony had nothing to offer him. Cage's methods of chance and coincidence kicked away the certainties around which traditional composition works. For him, each note can be both fundamental and accidental. Among the purest music he wrote, the 'number pieces' are notated with indications of material to be performed within a given duration. The first numbers in the titles refer to the number of performers or layers, while the second effectively indicates which version it is: it's up to the performer to control and shape the work. On the three CDs released on their own

OgreGress label, percussionist Glenn Freeman and vocalist/violist Christina Fong rise to Cage's challenge magnificently. Freeman's 72 minute performance of the percussion piece *Four4* is mesmerising, producing the sort of meditative concentration that Cage the Zen Buddhist would have greatly appreciated. With traditional ideas of harmony gone, our perception of scale also changes and the 72 minute span becomes all consuming.

Freeman's performances of *Three2* and *Six* are equally insightful, but this CD really belongs to Christina Fong. If *Four4* is monumental, *Twenty Six* is oddball and eerie. The harmonies are slightly sour and given extra spice by tiny, expertly placed glissandos. The effect of layering 26 separate violas lends violin parts suggests something almost superhuman, but the music also has an attractive vulnerability. *Twenty Three* also has Karen Krumer on cello to make a virtual string quartet, and the richness and scope of this highly sensual performance is a joy. The third OgreGress CD and volume six of MDG's exemplary cycle of Cage piano music played by Steffen Schleiermacher both focus on the *One* cycle. One represents some of the composer's greatest music even if it now seems strangely innocent. Already in *One2* we're into the epic and stretching soundtrack that would come to characterise Cage's number pieces. The piece is scored for one pianist at four pianos, each with its own material and subtle preparations. Schleiermacher presents two performances and in the second adds the extramusical sounds Cage allows for in his score. The familiar sound of Brahms's *Lullaby* forms an engrossing, disembodied dialogue with the gently unfolding anti-logic of Cage's music. Anti-logic is enough on its own thought, as both the first version and the extraordinarily barren *One5* testify. Schleiermacher understands this music instinctively.

Schleiermacher's set also documents the piano works which led up to *One*. ASISP is concept over music but the little known *Études Boveuses* and *The Beatles* are both vintage Cage. *Études Boveuses* is scored for 'a percussionist using a piano' and requires Schleiermacher to use the frame, wood and strings (and occasionally even the keys). The *Beatles* is 'Penny Lane' meets the New York loft scene, as Cage put a book of Beatles hits through random processes. This work encapsulates the most inspiring aspects of the



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## Kevin Martin and Justin Broadrick's latest suspect device is the bomb, says Mosi Reeves

### TECHNO ANIMAL THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE BOMB

NARRATOR OLIVER CO

I'm listening to this the day after a concert in a makeshift warehouse in Oakland, California that paired Techno Animal's Justin Broadrick and Kevin Martin with New York indie HipHop stars Aesop Rock, Mr Lif and Vast Aire. The reaction of 50 per cent of the crowd suggested that most of the American HipHop nation is not yet ready for the industrialist asbrangency of Techno Animal's new album, *The Brotherhood Of The Bomb*. When Broadrick and Martin took the spotlight, they drove half of the sold out audience outside for a smoke with their enabbling rumina of such Brotherhood tracks as "DC-10" and "Freefall". After finally yielding the stage to the MCs' boom bap homilies, a few of the teenybopper heads had the gall to yell out, "Fuck Techno Animal!"

If Brotherhood eventually gathers a substantial audience in the US, it might well be made up from followers of the formidable group of critics' darling MCs Techno Animal have gathered to help rock your socks off: Def Jaz fountainhead ELP, Cannibal Ox's wll o' the wise Vast Aire, Chicago's brutally surreal Rubberroom, lyrical shoegazer Sonic Sum, New Jersey newcomers d4lek, and New Flesh For Old regumuffin Toastie Taylor. The six collaborations, which break Brotherhood into an even split of vocal and instrumental tracks, might even lead the unintentioned to imagine Techno Animal as another squad of UK dance producers looking for some HipHop flava to liven up the proceedings — an erroneous assumption considering the trouble Broadrick and Martin have taken these past five years to engineer such musical crescendos. Even so, their streams can be traced back to Thickhead's reduction of Sotiksonic's "AFRICA", where Gary Clail re-imagined Steets's anti-apartheid chant as a seething cauldron of black-white

tensions and soundclashes, or Schooly D and DJ Cash Money's soul-destroying "It's Crack", which slammed the door on Saturday Night *The Album's* trigger-happy funk. Even Run-DMC's "Rock Box" could be cited as an evator for its pioneering combination of rap poetics and guitar noise.

Broadrick and Martin have their own tortured history to contend with. Broadrick is also guitarist and driving force of Technogrid outfit Godflesh who, over the course of several albums, piled sheets of feedback and tape loops over funk-up drum machines. The group made its debut connection with HipHop beats explicit on several cuts of 1997's *Love And Hate In Duo*, particularly on the bruising manipulation of a KRS-One sample "Circle Of Shit (To The Point Dub)". Meanwhile, Kevin Martin headed the now defunct, loose-knit jazzies collective God, initiated various crossbeat and dark mood projects with and without Broadrick, among them Ice, The Bug and The Sidewinder, as well as curating such influential genrebending compilations as *Isolationism*, *Macro Dub Infection* and *Jazz Setpieces*.

All these experiences would argue that the decade-strong Techno Animal collaboration between Broadrick and Martin is quite capable of igniting beautiful configurations on Brotherhood without anyone's help. On "Freefall", the bulbous bass drums leap out of the speakers like a gaseous stomach inflated by alien monsters, while on "Monoscopic", a trough of breakbeats is laced with echoing percussive flicks. Respectfully, however, they ease up the aural assault in order to accommodate their guests, though the encounter with Anti-Pop Consortium on "Glass Prism Enclosure" sinners with wide-eyed stares and barely held contempt. "Minds miniscule/Pint-sized/Measure in marbles/Marvels/Smears in searing structures/Shredded in shattered silences/No shelter/From gathering storms/Directed into a sea of faces to everyone you know in the Pacific within the radius of

my voice," Priest raps, unleashing mindsprays over Techno Animal's menace.

"DC-10" captures Sonic Sum spinning his own exegesis, "struggling for position in the Temordome", and peppering his vtrsee with more four syllable words than Professor X. Elsewhere, ELP and Vast Aire play Dr Octagon and Chewbacca on "We Can Build You", Toastie Taylor ambles through "Piranha" like a Rasta lost in the machine, and d4lek intones his unmentionables on the aptly titled "Hell".

With Limp Bizkit and their Nu Metal progeny shoving their commercial selves down everyone's throats, you can understand why the underground might want to oppose the mainstream with something equally hardcore. Rubberroom understand these impulses, which is why their opening salvo, "Cruise Mode 101", is on Brotherhood's standout track. Faced with an army of clattering war drums, Limbe and Meta-Mo rip the shit out of the music as they illustrate a technological monotony with more horsepower than Chuck D's 96 Oldsmobile, "bulletproof and black-tinted", flipping rhymes like heatseeking missiles, and spitting words so fast that they become verbal volleys smeared against the beat.

"Cruise Mode 101" is the only cut that lives up to Brotherhood's implicit promise to batter the senses, where Techno Animal's other pairings of guest MCs and metal machine music are simply too HipHop to cut loose. That's not necessarily a bad thing, just not what's expected. Then again, Techno Animal are more grindcore than Techno by virtue of their founding members' impressive pedigrees. Certainly Brotherhood raises a sizzling, going on overwhelming heat, its molten core lit up by searing sparks as it occasionally emits loud, isolated strains of treble and bass, while ebb restraining themselves from all out sonic warfare. Meanwhile, the penopy of voices simply illustrates the pleassurably painful period of anticipation before the bomb explodes. □



number pieces and is the most audible example of how for Cage had moved the goal posts of conventional musical thinking.

**Studs Bonolis** marked the first time Cage used the piano since 1958. While it's nice to have a CD of Yajima's historically important recording of *Sonatas And Interludes*, the Cage classic dating from that earlier period, it has been superseded by more recent versions. Indeed, Yajima's non-demonstrative performance cannot match either Schiermeier or Philippe Venne on Mode.

## DESTROY ALL MONSTERS BACKWARD MONSTER TUBE AND PIG

BOOK BEAT NO NUMBER CD

## VARIOUS MUSIC IS REVOLUTION: FROM THE JOHN & LENI SINCLAIR LIBRARY

BOOK BEAT NO NUMBER CD

BY EDWIN POUNCEY

The resurgence of *Destroy All Monsters*, the Detroit artists' collective group made up of founder members Mike Kelley, Jim Shaw and Cary Loren, owes much to an impressive triple CD set of their 70s archive recordings released several years ago by Ecstatic Peace / Father Tod. Like the kind of Japanese giant monster movie they named themselves after, DAM have returned to terrify audiences again with Dadistic anti-rock/noise performance pieces. These recorded for proximity are usually released in limited quantities on labels like Sympathy For The Record Industry and, here, Loren's own Book Beat. Their latest release is called *four performances in Los Angeles in 1995 and Tokyo a year later*, for which they were joined by Art Brignon, Dave Muller and Xavier Boushien. Their preference considerably boosts the original group's avant rock attack. The 11 sections making up "Backward Monster Tube" capture DAM firing on all cylinders: their demented guitar shrieking, damaged percussion and instrumental shredding produces a sonic cornucopia collage, supplemented by the grind of tortured toys, abused household appliances and Godzilla movie samples. Out of this chaos rears up an improvisation assembled from memorised shards of Stooges, Sun Ra and SRC. A scary yet fabulous rock 'n' roll animal.

So too "Pig," whose feedback organ drone and broken trumpet accompanies an anti-Christus

raut with stanzas like, "Come on you farking pig, hurry up and intercede me with your garbage farts so I can lie and deceive the missions of the world, Amen".

The spirit behind "Pig" partly derives from the 60s revolutionary sloganising of the Detroit based White Panthers, a movement spun out of the political and creative teachings of MCS manager John Sinclair. Sinclair's *Trans Love Energies* "Guitar Army" drew up a ten-point programme of demands for a more equal society. They also set up their own label and publishing house, and proceeded to blast out their message of rock and revolution through concerts and recordings by MCS. The Up and various free jazz players. Such militant action eventually landed Sinclair a ten year jail sentence after being busted for possessing two joints. Although it was a frame-up, it temporarily silenced Sinclair and effectively de-clawed the Panthers. Now, *MUSIC IS REVOLUTION* uncages Panther power in the shape of a fascinating series of spoken word documents. Especially interesting is a phone conversation between Sinclair and Grande Ballroom owner Russ Gibbs about the state of the Detroit music scene, a radio spot for SRC, an interview with house group The Lip, plus Art Ensemble Of Chicago's Joseph Jarman and one David Fenton passionately discussing the forces behind "Great Black Music".

## AXEL DÖRNER TRUMPET

TRUMPET SECRET NO CD

BY TOM FENIMORE

Trumpeter Axel Dörner approaches every playing context differently, free squealing or silently keeping up the cosmic demands. In smaller and quieter groups, though, he steps down his playing to a style-less chaos, where only the basic fundamentals of air and vibration remain. The quiet detail in this area of his playing makes the presence of other musicians intrusive, and as his solo recording shows, unnecessary — such is his ability to maintain a dialogue between different parts of his horn.

The first of the two tracks is a 25 minute spat between spitting noise and whispering pitch. Dörner's embouchure traps circular breath and vibration between lip and bottom lip, never letting signal transform into tone. The resultant surface of wedding noise conceals a slow moving, continuously evolving line of subtleties

produced by the trumpeter's manipulation of valves and airflow. Eventually but abruptly, the noise stops, and the piece ends with a four minute silence. Even though he hasn't provided a second of memorably memorable music, it's impossible to hear this silence as plain. The noise won't go away. Dörner somehow makes two diametrically opposed musical ideals of the 1960s, fusing the psychosomatic tricks of pure minimalism with improvisation's continuous experimentation.

The second piece is perhaps less successful. Dörner sacrifices his minimal approach, but extends his means only slightly, clouding the issue without adding much variety. It seems that several microphones have been placed around the trumpet, each one tracking air across the stereo picture as it escapes from the instrument's various tubes. Dörner creates a hocket of breath that darts around the instrument as he diverts late blasts of air from one valve tube to another: it's a weightless and nimble contrast to the first piece, even if it's not continuously engaging.

## ENDGAME AVATAR

ULTIMATE TRANSMISSIONS UTCD0067 CD

BY EDWIN POUNCEY

Endgame are a trio from Leicester, featuring brothers Alan and Steven Freeman, with musician, engineer and designer Jim Tetlow. The Freemans run *Krautrock* ensemble Um Thule and co-edited *Audion*, its in-house fanzine specialising in *Krautrock*, Progressive rock and all things kosmische. They are also the authors of *The Crack In The Cosmic Egg*, a thoroughly comprehensive, albeit somewhat joyless, "Krautrock encyclopedia". Finally, the show has hatched two labels to cover the spirit of the Freemans' interests and musical activity. Cosmic Egg issues rare archive material from obscure or neglected groups such as German jazz-Proggers Out Of Focus and Ultimate Transmissions keeps tabs on the Freemans' Endgame. Anyone who shares the brothers' obsession with early Targemine Dream and Neus Schutze will find much to distract them on this 150 minute double CD, with belabour track titles like "Crashes Into Amber Liquid" and "Paranoid-Critical Solitude". Scarcely clocked to the glory days of *Krautrock*, they adhere to its improving spirit with almost military fervour, skillfully evolving the deep space resonators of parietal Schutze et al.

Yet unlike, say, Acid Mothers Temple's transubstantiations of psychedelia, nothing on Avatar suggests that Endgame want to move the music on from where *Krautrock* eventually stalled it.

## FAIRLEY/MILLS/WALTON REPUBLIC OF THORNS

WORDSWORTH TRUST NO NUMBER CD

BY LOUISE GRAY

If the Republic Of Thorns is a place, it is characterised by the half light of pre-dawn or dusk. Brooding, delicately placed sounds give way over time to sketches of what may be gurgling streams, swooning birds or far away bells. The trio's treatment of these initially natural sounds causes memory to distort, creating an inescapable sense of decay.

Russell Mills and Ian Walton have manifested these concerns before. Although primarily visual artists, they have both enthusiastically resented categorisation — especially Mills, whose 1995 *Urland* album was a fantasy masterpiece. Their installation *Measured In Shadows* used sound as a memory aide for archaeological excavation. Republic Of Thorns was even more to their fine art practice than conventional musical methods. The recording is a fragment of an installation the pair made with poet Paul Farley for a Wordsworth Trust commission, created as a response to Wordsworth's "The Thorn". Given Britain's current agricultural woes, it's also a lament for the loss of the pastoral.

Freud from tonality or rhythm, their sound sculptures rely on colour and texture, over which Farley reads his poem "Thorn". It's an astonishing link, stream and thick with meaning, in which thorns become less punitive than in Wordsworth. Here, longevity and resilience are located in the bark. It's an impression, something that might well suit the word up all those who travel to Gorsemer for the Wordsworth heritage experience and come away bearing souvenir tea towels.

## SCOTT FIELDS ENSEMBLE THIS THAT

ACCORTIONS 004 CD

## SCOTT FIELDS ENSEMBLE 96 GESTURES

BLUESHIPHOP 2001 3CD

BY JULIAN COWLEY

Scott Fields is an electric guitarist who can go for the jaguar while shouldering some fairly hefty

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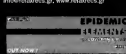
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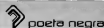
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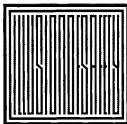
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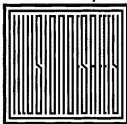
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conceptual baggage. His squally eruptions on *That* suggest an intelligent and ironic man giving vent to seething anger and frustration. But this too according to the sympathetic company of cellist Peggy Lee and drummer Dylan Van Der Stuyft is by no means all plain. Much of the album has a probing feel, quietly teasing apart modest phrases and motifs that are firmly established at the start then continuously revised and elaborated. The three players circle around the core material kneading and tugging until it has stretched into a piece that can be called "This is That," "That is This" or "That is That." The remarkable fits acoustically reflect music that seems conclusive but is primed to unravel in order to begin again. Despite the assertive time, nothing is ever definitively stated because it can always be said otherwise, as in all successful improvising.

Fields has said that his use of the word "Ensemble" pays homage to the Art Ensemble of his native Chicago, rather than being a means to identify a particular group of musicians. The personnel kept up behind the name has varied wildly. Van Der Stuyft recurs on 96 Gestures but as part of a 12 piece group steered by conductor Stephen Dembski. Among the other members are also saxophonist Joseph Jarman, pianist Myra Melford, clarinetist Francis Houle and Rob Mazurek on cornet. The composition is a structure of eved modules giving leads that encourage improvisation. Outcome can vary considerably as these three realisations, each more than an hour long, demonstrate well. Common to all three is a sense of fluency, lightness and mobility, multiple events and constant activity without unwanted snarl or messy collisions. Ostensibly very different to *This That*, and on a label subsidiary to CB, which has for many years championed contemporary composition, 96 Gestures nonetheless shares points of contact in its questioning repetitions and variations, its (more formal) permutatory manoeuvres and the sense that no concluding gesture can ever be more than provisional. Field's choice of collaborators has been one of his strengths. Here it ensures sensitive playing and accurate reading that align the piece with substantial work by the likes of Butch Morris, Anthony Braxton and John Zorn seeking ways to sustain and extend creative relationships between composed forms and alert improvising.

FRIDGE  
HAPPINESS  
TEXT CD CDLP  
BY TOM RIDGE

Ridge's earlier output sounded like a fast, youthful riposte to dominant US-styled post-rock. Their ambitiously eclectic repertoire was delivered with rock-solid force. Here that sound has evolved into something altogether more varied in tone and protean in execution.

On this fourth album, the first on guitarist Kieran Hebden's own Text label, Fridge show signs of restlessness, even impatience, with their perceived sound. The opening "Melodica And Trombone" – for, you guessed it, melodica and trombone – sounds like a deliberately vague attempt at fusion, something which the following "Drum Machines And Glockspeak" pulls off with greater success. Literally lifting such tracks after the instruments involved suggests a degree of

clinical detachment. Calling the album *Happiness* is especially ironic in this light. Perhaps Hebden is drawing attention to the idea that it's more about exploring textures than expressing emotions. "Five Four Child Voice" is a lengthy, minimalist excursion into melody and myth, the group pared back to its guitar, bass and drums basics; "Harmonics" is a solo acoustic guitar piece contrasting blurring, percussive strumming with more conventional, almost folk-styled, melody. The closing "Land Singing" takes a more layered approach, with the group mixing drum samples, melodic guitar and distant, abstract harmonies, as it gradually ascends to a climax.

FUN-DA-MENTAL  
THERE SHALL BE LOVE  
NATION NR2002 CD  
BY CLAYE BELL

Fun-Da-Mental's last LP was 1998's *Enraptured*. *Territory* Shall Be Love is Aki Nawaz's lively, globe-trotting collaboration with Sufi devotional singers, Zulu choirs, Bengali Bauls and Tibetan throat singers. So this could be bracketed with the recent efforts of Talvin Singh and Nitin Sawhney, albums that show off their collection of airport baggage stickers and set you down to watch the slides of their trip. Except that Aki used to be the drummer in Southern Death Cut, and his natural mood is a table-sounding voodoo rage rather than dinner party tact. When Aki works with Indian classical singer Ustad Ghulam Hassan Shaggar, he awards the 74-year-old maestro the ultimate accolade of calling him "a true punk". The result, "All Seeing Heart", is a beautiful track, all spiralling flutes, violins and dulcimers over gently patting tabla. It's also the CD's exception: elsewhere, the pulse rate is high and the energy level storming, as Aki generates breaks both phat and gurgling to underpin his master vocalists.

Four fine songs feature Sufi Qawwals Rishwan and Muazzam, two young nephews of the late Nawaz. *Enraptured* was their own album, *A Better Destiny*, contains ecstatic posturing and bags of attitude, and there's also a recent collaboration with Temple Of Sound (both on Razi World). They are natural partners for Fun-Da-Mental. The single, "The Last Gospel", opens the album with a vocal hook as big as a harpoon. The beat is massive, but it is not a formulaic track; Aki knows when to open up the sound to expose an un-reverbed Indian Raga or wonderfully scratchy vocals. Rishwan-Muazzam work naturally at this high level of passion, and their tracks are a convincing fusion. Aki orchestrates and enhances the drama, hurling an unexpected drum fill or death rattle into the mix. In *Johannesburg*, Aki teams up with Zamo Mbema and his Zulu choir "Sunday School" opens with just the choir, and it's so lushly perfect you feel sorry for Aki – anything he adds will only detract. Undeterred, he throws tom-toms and organ at the song anyway. All ends well, but it illustrates what can happen if you work with the best. Mbema's rasping bass voice leads the way on "Fire Water", over a raging torrent of bhangra rhythms. And "Wandering Soul" nicely contrasts Bap Das Baul's sweet Bengali vocal melismas with prowling, snarling drums.

If you can keep up with the pace, this is an exhilarating album. Apart from a couple of thin tracks towards the end, there's plenty of musical

richness and flare. One thought, though – I can hear the computer. I don't just mean literally, as when the cybersonce of Aki's Apple Mac G4 duets with bawny group Huan Huan to on "More Than A Hundred Times". What I mean is, I can hear the software at work in the arrangements, in the way a track like "Fire Water" is blatantly dropped and stretched. This editing becomes a signifier of the presence of First World technology in the music. Of course, it's a less hands-on, less organic tool than, say, King Tubby's mung desk. It tells you that this is a meeting between a signed up Brit and a Third World artist, and that the song was structured in cyberspace. No big deal maybe, except that some types of collaboration work better in real time.

GLASS CAGE  
GLASS CAGE  
PARANATIME PLE1110 CD  
BY JULIAN COWLEY

Gary Smith is a hugely undervalued electronic guitarist. His playing embraces all the edge and excitement of rock while rejecting its securities, whipping up lurid whirlpools and riding the charged crest of a pulsating tide of sound without ever sacrificing the technical control that sets him apart. The two Glass Cage brings his daunting power into company that can respond in kind. It's an inspired combination.

After recent albums demonstrating *How Hopper's* skill at crafting songs here is a formidable reminder of his strength and resourcefulness as a bassist. He can be massively fuzzy, working with fields rather than points and lines of sound, and thickening Smith's often densely orchestrated voicings. He can throw in a loop, repeatedly interpose, or surge forward, rolling steadily beneath the guitarist's wild peaks and troughs. On drums is Shay Hano, whose wealth of musical experience, including work with High Rise, Neji Hino, Derek Bailey and in a trio with Peter Brottmann and Nils Koppelius, equips him perfectly for the peculiar challenges of this encounter. His rhythmic flexibility is crucial as he negotiates the swirling and burning, not so much driving the group as adding details and tasks to guide the ear.

Smith helped out on Hopper and Lisa S. Klossner's fine song collection *Crysalids* (2000). He also played on Hano's self-titled album issued last year by Chromosphere. But the three musicians met together for the first time at the Glass Cage session. Improvised without rehearsal, all ten pieces gel and spark in ways that meticulous planning probably couldn't achieve. That's part of the magic of such music, of course. 30 years ago guitarists such as John McLaughlin and Ray Russell signalled ways to open up the electric instrument's potential on albums now valued as bold and energetic period pieces. Importantly, Smith, Hopper and Hano have followed those signals through and broken out of the time capsule, making this rock improvisation power trio an eternally viable and exhilarating 21st century option.

GUAPU  
GREAT SEAVE, EQUAL OF  
HAGEN  
PANDENIUM PAND-41 CD  
BY STEPHEN ROBINSON

Taking its name from the 17th century Chinese text *Journal To The West* (or perhaps a little more



directly, from the Japanese TV series *Monkey*). London-based bands and duos duo Guapo's fourth album confronts the view that it's only from the dark side of Black Sabbath that the devil's own riffs spring forth. Guapo's contention is that the devil prince's real work lies in a stream of music so abundant as to be rivaled by all but middle-class schoolboys and the demotically possessed. From its opening out, "Mountain Of The Five Elements", it's immediately apparent that the duo have been sipping from the same dark chalice that intoxicated Lark's *Reveries* and King Crimson. Yes, the most immediate reference here is the wile speeds of Progressive rock. The millitron like that countenances the revolving bass and drums as crows the Ormon connection, while the lurch into the sea-led *Igna Oriental* melody of "Blessed Almond", courtesy regular Guapo collaborator Caroline Kraabel, is worthy of the frenetic contortions of Italy's *Ana*.

Yet, despite the evidence just stacked against this, this is definitely not the work of neo-Prog wannabes. Rather, Guapo move between reference and reprisal with an ease that recalls The Sun City Girls' excursions into Eastern-themed psychedelia. Prog affectations might be to the fore, but they always remain on the higher side of Prog's most gratuitous excesses. Focusing exclusively on the form, while holding back from their earlier recourse to production overload, via the use of samplers and turntables, they've somehow subverted the most notorious aspects of the music into something altogether darker.

## HIM NEW FEATURES

BY TONY HERRINGTON

New Features continues the process that began with last year's *Devil Point Of Departure*, in which drummer Doug Schanz attempts to reinvent HIM as a modern jazz trio for the post-rock generation. It's one industry acquaintance who says that all rock musicians heretofore haven't seemed to play jazz, and here, if *Fortune* wasn't already providing it, it's proof. The only tracks on new *Features* that hint at HIM's previous incarnation as a studio kendo cloudy dub trio are "Clouds" and "Nine Dots", their languorous live duos representing something of a retreat from the stoned echo chamber oddities that defined earlier HIM releases such as *Egg* and *Intergalactic Relief System* (the latter on Skiz Fernando's *Coolin' Widesound* label).

Our *Point Of Departure* was a compelling take on the early 70s trance groove techniques pioneered by Afrika 70 and Miles Davis's group circa *On The Corner*, with Schanz depicting the mixing desk like an alchemist's stone to transmute the base metal of his group's retro jam sessions into a periodic table of shimmering alloys. But on *New Features* the studio scene is mostly veiled in secrecy and the mood is closer to that of a hazy jazz blowing session. Having said that, the rhythmic track on "Sea Level" is as near as dammit to a direct lift from Miles's "Black Satin", as Schanz looks into one of Jack DeJohnette's patented shuffle patterns, and Fred Erskine rips on the legacy of Michael Henderson's fanged basslines. Of the six long tracks, "Dot Here" has the best tune and arrangement, but the studio take is eclipsed by

the tense live version included on *The Nine Tapper 6*. "In Transition" and "Mangled Features", meanwhile, wouldn't sound out of place on a John Scofield record, which is something of an unexpected departure for a musician who helped develop the magdolan sludgecore of *Codense* and *Ris*.

## KING ÜBU ORCHESTRO TRIGGER ZONE

FMP 117 CD

BY TOM FERCHARD

Although the King Übu Orchestra was formed in the early 1980s, *Trigger Zone* is only its third album, recorded nearly three years ago. However, the players – none of them here, including Wolfgang Fuchs, Radu Mafaita, Phil Wachsmann and Axel Ömer – are hardly in a rush to make up for such under-representation by overstating their case. Thiving on trip, prismatic movements, the group's sound is characterised by delicate textural shifts rather than the nugged velocity of many late improvising groups. In his sleeve notes, Peter Niklas Wilson suggests that the Orchestra's reliance on ungrit and anti-genital material has enabled it to "abandon the rhetoric of European and African-American 'music tradition'". But while the instrumentalists' various approaches are refreshingly free of linguistic cliché, the group's textual strategies push them into the structural rhetoric of atonality and period, paraphrasing strains of breathy sound into a serialised "symphonic" dialectic. The music's improvised content may be quietly radical, but the near unavailability of that radicalism demands an orthodoxy of form that no one here is willing to question or cease.

Fuchs's contrabass clarinet, Melyn Poore's tuba and Fernando Güis's double bass often anchor the music with repeated or sustained pedal notes, the other horns floating airy above. But the music is at its best when it breaks away from such traditional orchestral roles, when the group sound like they're playing in single file, striving to get away from each other but bound by the moment. Near the end of the fourth and final track, they finally fall into line, basking like happy seals before peeling off and carrying on, each re-examining their own contribution to an unusually besuited moment. An under-mixed Paul Lytton chucks around smaller and smaller shards of percussion, while Poore collapses into the depths of his instrument. Only when the Orchestra explodes the orchestral does it really begin to make improvised music.

## ANITA LANE SEX O'CLOCK

MUTE STUMPTON CD

BY DAVID KEENAN

Anita Lane arrived in London from Melbourne back in 1980 as part of the raggedy Birthday Party expedition led by Nick Cave in search of punk rock chicks. Since then she's been more than just a taste to Cave. Not only did she co-write such punishing Birthday Party works as "Dead Joe", "A Dead Song" and "Kiss Me Black", she also helped develop the early Bad Seeds' key text, "From Her To Eternity", and the later "Stronger Than Kindness". It's been eight years since her first album, *Dirty Pearl*, which compiled her Dirty Songs EP of bastardised love songs

with tracks spanning more than a decade of encounters with The Birthday Party, Biza Bargaed and Einstürzende Neubauten, and Berlin's militant guitar classics. *Dot Here*, Sex O'Clock immediately feels more fully realised, with the sold producer of Bad Seed Mick Harvey, a longtime friend and collaborator, giving the album a more uniform feel without sacrificing the honey-thick air of hedonism that made Dirty Pearl such a guilty pleasure.

Opening with a cover of G Smith-Herens' "Home Is Where The Hearted Is", Lane rides in on a seductively trusted organ and bass groove while reciting the Vlang of that set that sets up the basic theme of the album: escape from domestic turmoil via fantasies of ego-oblivion. As some tracks here were originally birthed from loops of Bad Seeds jams, it's no surprise that they've floated on the same kind of groove that propelled the likes of Cave's "Stagger Lee" or "Lime Tree Airborne", though a song like "Do That Thing" here permits Harvey to have a little more fun than he's used to in the Bad Seeds. However, "The Next Man" reprises Lane's theme of domestic destruction, dopping her amid her "broken house, broken plates and broken fragments", and the album's centerpiece, "The Petrol Wife", is a seductively difficult track, with Lane's overblown vocals constructing a hall of mirrors where her multiplied voices echo and each other's lies while hallucinatory images of ritualised sex and repressive childhood memories flash by in a devious mix of memory and desire. The set closes, appropriately enough, with the beautiful reading of the forlorn "Bella Ciao", a traditional ballad of parting.

## BILL LASWELL/ CARLOS SANTANA DIVINE LIGHT

COLUMBIA LEGACY COL56229 CD

BY EDWIN POUNCEY

In 1997 producer Bill Laswell was granted access to Columbia's tape vaults where, using the original masters, he put together *Revelations*, his divided reconstruction of Miles Davis's once-great, now-acclaimed electric period. Tearing out the music's spiritual dimension, Panofsky was an Ambient fusion power force which breathed new life into the originals without detracting from Davis's artistic intentions. In the process Laswell allowed listeners to hear such important Milestones as *In A Silent Way* born a new angle.

On *Divine Light* Laswell devotes the same care and attention to detail to two spiritually inclined David Garcia Santana albums from the mid-70s, when the guitarist was a disciple of Guru Sri Chinmoy. *Altamontes*, featuring the harp playing and string arrangements of Turiya Coltrane; and *Love, Devotion, Surrender*, with former Miles Davis guitarist and fellow Sex Chimney follower Mahavishnu John McLaughlin. Here both records bleed into each other almost seamlessly, producing an extension of the aura that dris like incense smoke through songs such as "Angel Of Air", the extended "Bliss The Eternal Now – Return", and Santana and McLaughlin's variations of John Coltrane's "A Love Supreme" and "Naima". The pairing of these two guitarists, alongside Alisa Coltrane's monastic harp embellishments and the swell of a string ensemble, is a deft touch which Laswell uses



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## Soundcheck

efficiently and effectively to cause his "mix transition" to levitate the original pieces towards an even higher plane.

Designer Tadeusz Yeko's beautiful packaging attempts to recreate in miniature the unfolding mystical extravaganza which he provided for *Sensory's* *Lotus* (1974). Applying such loving care to the look and sound of *Deive Left* confirms that Lasseus's commitment to the project is based on a firmer foundation than nostalgia.

### STEPHEN P. MCGREEVEY AURORA CHORUS II: MUSIC OF THE MAGNETOSPHERE SP MCGREEVEY PRODUCTIONS NO NUMBER CD BY RICHARD HENDERSON

The naturally occurring VLF (Very Low Frequency) radio signals documented on *Aurora Chorus II: Music Of The Magnetosphere* were first heard by Inneson during early telephone wires in the late 19th century. A century or so later, Stephen McGreevey captured several "performances" by involving the Earth's own radio emissions, the audio counterpart to the shifting currents of colour in the upper atmosphere known as the Aurora Borealis. The music generated by these mysterious signals — "the first radio signals people ever heard," according to the notes — immediately recalls Charles Dodge's early electronic recordings, which were based on scores drawn up from graphs of sunspot activity. Dodge's work translated natural activity into a composition for mainframe-driven tone generators. McGreevey's recordings are nothing less than the actual sounds of solar winds brushing against the magnetic envelope surrounding the earth.

Beneath the constant static crackle of electromagnetic impulses generated by lightning storms (referred to as "static" by VLF aficionados), waves of rising or falling tones are heard. Often, these occur in layers, with "whistlers" soaring above a mass of bubbling, rustled tones. The earlier monophonic recordings accentuate the transient explosions of static above the more musical aspects of McGreevey's activity. The switch to stereo midway through the disc is much welcomed; suddenly, the music of the upper atmosphere comes into its own, and even casual listeners can begin to appreciate McGreevey's comparisons to the songs of tropical birds and whales.

The CD is the last word in DIY, with almost no additional mastering. To be fair, even slight adjustments in equalization could have enhanced the whistler-to-clerical ratio in favour of a more evenly musical experience, but authenticity is clearly the recordist's principal concern. In between raw blasts of natural electro fury, the hooking of solar powered melodies flutters upward, then reverses its path and slumbers in descending arcs.

*Aurora Chorus II: Music Of The Magnetosphere* functions nicely as a benign companion volume to the sinister shadowy mumbblings of *Idol-Discs' The Comet Project* (indeed, I'd almost released a double CD of McGreevey's VLF recordings in 1998). Both albums delight in the mystery and random grace notes of specific electronic phenomena. But where *Comet's* Cold War transmissions mix paranoid interpretation, *Aurora Chorus II* evokes awe in its most unvarnished form.

### MOTHER MALLARD'S PORTABLE MASTERPIECE CO LIKE A DUCK TO WATER CANDIDUS RHYTHM CD BY MIKE BARNES

Formed in 1970, Mother Mallard were the world's first all synthpop group. Well, they did enjoy a close relationship with Bob Moog, who let them test out his equipment. This, their second and final album recorded between 1974 and 1976, is based on the compositions of David Borden and Steve Davis. Borden's interest lay more in process and anagogical systems music like his "C-A-G-E" pieces, while Davis's compositions were more lyrical.

At the time, synth music could roughly be divided into two areas: serious composition, and music in which the new timbres and features available were used to extend the mind-expanding qualities of psychedelia from explorations of inner space into outer space music. The popular manifestations of the latter were often little more than the classical repertoire given a high-tech revamp by the likes of Tomita and Walter/Wendy Carlos.

Here the music combines both approaches into compositions that sonically echo Malcolm Cecil/Torrio's *Expanding Headband* and the transcendence of German pioneers like Tangerine Dream and Klaus Schulze. But the music is hardly cosmic bliss — Dews's "Waterwheel" exemplifies the group's "controlled improvisation" aesthetic. Its on/off motifs, constantly mutating arpeggios and unstoppable momentum nod towards earlier Philip Glass compositions, like *Music In Twelve Parts*. A collaboration with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company in 1972 — which involved the performance of a Cage piece — saw the seeds for Borden's 20 minute homage, "C-A-G-E Part K". The first Moog sequencer gets to grips with the four notes and is counterpointed by more synth and electric piano, so that each player's cell reacts to the others in unpredictable ways.

### MOUNT VERNON ARTS LAB THE SEANCE AT HOBBS LANE ASTORIA-ASTORIA CD BY JOHN MULVEY

If anyone could find psychogeographical significance in the location of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop, it had to be Drew Mulholland, analogue magick at the heart of Mount Vernon Arts Lab. For his fifth album, Mulholland takes familiar obsessions — suburbanian chambers, the dubious allure of midlife — and chases them back through time. If much of his previous work was easily categorised as retro-futurism, *Seance at Hobbs Lane* nuclear command bunkers, and Louis and Lela Barron's still alarming scene to Forbidden Planet. The *Seance At Hobbs Lane* delves further into the crevices and antechambers beneath old London and beyond.

The album flaunts its arcane learning on a sleeve bearing a quote from the *Journal Of Parapsychology*. Mercifully, Mulholland treats it playfully rather than with excessive Gothic reverence. His ideal location for these baroque streaks of electronics would probably be an abandoned Victorian tube station, a place of unexplained magnetism and historic ghosts. His title, however, is drawn from the 1967 Hammer movie, *Quatermass And The Pit*, which combines

underground emanations, science fiction spaceport and demonic manifestations.

The idea that Mulholland would be happiest practising his electronics in isolation is wrong, however. Like his friend Suzi Dade (*Future Pilot AKI*), he thrives on collaboration. Mads Langer's strongest tracks set the antique hum against Raymond McDonald's incantatory spherisms ("The Vauld Labyrinth", "Pesty Topleys") or Belle & Sebastian minstrel lobby Campbell's choice (the exceptional "The Black Drop"). A remix of "The Subterranean Song" by Add N to (X) scrambles a music box melody against some ferocious Trinks dematerialisation on phasing. Other tracks are less enticing. It's hard to gauge whether the intriguing title of "St Kerri At Lambeth" shelters anything more than crotchety industrialism. Still, Mulholland's humour and his determination to give the music a distinctive, frequently dark sense of place, and a mutable sense of time, sets *Hobbs Lane* above so much other nostalgic electronics.

### AKIKAZU NAKAMURA DAIBOSATSU: SHAKUHACHI MUSIC FROM KYUSHU DENON COG01518 CD BY CLIVE BELL

This is an album of great power, ferocity even, from a youngish shakuhachi player who is something of a maverick in the world of Japanese classical music. Nakamura has researched and studied these old Zen pieces at the Ikhoen temple in Kyushu, West Japan. The classical concert style is contemporary Japan is relaxed and polished — Nakamura is attempting to dig down into almost forgotten regional traditions, ways of playing associated with the Komuro, those strange 18th century bakemoni monks with baskets on their heads. The history of the Komuro is littered with violence, extortion, espionage, forged documents and other behaviour you would not expect from a nice Buddhist temple. But when those temples they did develop an extraordinary tradition of solo shakuhachi playing. Just how extraordinary can be heard immediately on Nakamura's title track, an 11 minute tour de force of passionate gusts of breath, pulsing and extreme tone colours, occasionally reinforced by vocal noise. The right notes here, three are higher and higher pitched, but still quite raw — they're possibly imitations of the side-blow flute used to accompany lion dances. This music rarely settles down, and those searching for new Age Pacific calm must look elsewhere. This is more like a Peter Bittnerian solo album.

Nakamura's background includes a rock group with Hiroshi's rock player: Michio Yag, free playing with Joseph Jarman of The Art Ensemble Of Chicago, and graduation from Berkeley College of Music. As a shakuhachi player he is picking up and developing the wild, semi-improvisational style embodied in the Zen monk Watazumi, who died a few years ago. An eccentric and unique player, Watazumi knew instinctively how to secure the state of extreme discipline and outer freedom — just like Bittnerman, perhaps. A close examination of Watazumi's recording of "Daibosatsu" next to Nakamura's gave me the feeling that the latter was aiming at a definitive statement, whereas Watazumi has all the spontaneity of a sudden cloudburst. Nakamura's sheer power and technical mastery contrast with

Watazumi's attractive weakness, when sometimes he struggles for a note in a moving way. But these are qualities. By any standards, Nakamura's playing is in the top rank, and it's fantastic that a player this good is researching this tradition.

### PÄRSON SOUND PÄRSON SOUND TILLNÄMNINGEN SUBMIMMAL SOUNDS TILG 3XCD BY EDWIN POUNCEY

Defying the world to ignore the psychedelic shamanism and intense spirituality of their music, the battle cry of late 60s Stockholm underground quartet, Päron Sound was "We, Here and Now!". Unfortunately, up to now their music has been a well-kept secret, despite such high profile appearances as supporting The Doors, and being personally invited by Andy Warhol to open his 1968 exhibition at Stockholm's Museum of Modern Art (Magnus Haglund mentions them in his feature on the Swedish avant-garde, The Ecstatic Society, in *The Wire* 210). Compiling unreleased live and studio recordings, *Päron Sound* is an astonishing find that successfully buckles all notions of how rock, jazz and experimental music should behave.

The first CD opens with a falling guitar drone that "boils you into thinking that the remaining nine minutes or so of '10 Minutes' ('Ten Minutes') will be equally lackluster and hypnotic. It turns out that the intro is a short musical fuse setting off a cacophonous hard rock explosion that owes more to the psychedelic Metal brutalities of 60s heavyweights Blue Cheer than the minimalist line patterns of La Monte Young and Terry Riley (whose ideas Päron Sound were also strongly attracted to, indeed they met in an ad hoc ensemble put together to perform Riley's music). Rather than just endlessly chirping and hammering at Rick's surface noise, however, the group carry out complex sound experiments, whose full richness only emerge with several patient replays.

On "From Tunes to India In Fullmoon (On Instatone)", a live recording from 1968, the group bring into play their love and understanding of free jazz. Bo Anders Persson's looping electric guitar, Thomas Fichtens' aggressive sax and Arne Ericsson's howling electric cello supply the swirling black centre for a sonic tornado.

The main members of Päron Sound went on to form the equally short-lived International Harvester, who recorded an album for Love Records called *Soy Gatt Rose Marie* (Good Night Rose Marie). Two openers and closes with works from this period, both of which plunge headlong into a rockified swamp of strange sounds, devotional drones and amplified abstraction.

### PAUL PLIMLEY & JOHN OSWALD/ MERCILY CRISP/LE/ CARIL TAYLOR COMPLICATE VICTO 04103078 3XCD BY BILL SHOEMAKER

To find *Estivado Internacional de Musica Acustica* de Victorival's 2000 edition with a bang, promoter Michel Levasseur booked Carol Taylor to headline an evening of solo piano sets with Marilyn Crispell. However, Levasseur got



## Soundcheck

### JACQUES BERROCAL PARALLÈLES ALCA MARCHEL (KAY) 83785-027 CD

Jacques Berrocal's profoundly wayward muse has eluded its way across the hinter side of European leftfield music for the past three decades. Since his debut album *Musik-Musik* for Futura in 1973, his recorded output, both under his own name and in innumerable collaborative enterprises, has always been marked by an eclecticism bordering on the insane. Perhaps nowhere has the faux erratic but finely tuned interventionist streak within Berrocal's many musical personae been better demonstrated than on the excellent *Fatal Encounters* retrospective released by the French imprint Les Disques Du Soleil Et De L'Aoer. To name just a few, he's been co-conspirator and No Wave screamer in Catalogue, which he formed at the end of the 70s with Jean-François Pouvros and Gilbert Artman; one of the founders of the highly idiosyncratic d'Avantage label; and more recently has played with Pascal Comelade, Pierre Bastien and Can's Jaki Leibezeit on *The Oblique Sessions*; and with the Portuguese experimental duo Telectu alongside Chris Carter. As an artistic provocateur with a diverse array of musicians, this "indomitable" trumpet-wielding Berrocal has always moved between differing agendas without ever subscribing to rules or to dogma.

True to form, *Parallèles*, whose five original tracks were recorded in October 1976, is an album characterised by Berrocal's penchant for dadaesque collisions and juxtapositions, abruptly changing pace with all the sharp-edged audacity of the *Nouvelle Vague*. Yet for all its detours and derailments, it's an album that consistently probes and exposes the settings in which its dramas are enacted. As Pascal Bussay has remarked, Berrocal is as much as stage director as he is a musical director, and on *Parallèles*

his sense of the space and place of performance is equally as palpable as the sounds which inhabit it. This is more than apparent right from the outset. The album opens with the title track where Berrocal, on yawn trombone, and his chief accomplice here, Roger Ferlet (slide trombone), quickly establish a kind of displaced theatricality. A strange cast of sparsely staged characters appear in a *buveur* fashion, as if in a Beckett play; alternately communicating with long languid melancholic figures, miscommunicating with a rasping, staccato screech, or rambling nonsensically with comic bouts of brass band blather. But it's the stark economy of setting which is the striking aspect of this recording, and which contrasts so sharply with the track which follows.

Rather than the deranged personae who inhabit the tabula rasa world of "Parallèles", on "Post-Card" Berrocal's affinity for unusual recording environments becomes the focus of attention. Performed by Berrocal and Ferlet together with Michel Potage, who reads (in French) and adds a disengaged scraping guitar, "Post-Card" was unmistakably recorded in a pigsty. And the over-amped clatter of machines and tin, howling wind and incessant squealing pigs, adds a macabre proto-industrial feel to the piece. Once again, this is counterpoised with Berrocal's short solo cornet piece, "Galimatas", which is lean and bright, tinged with an eerie sense of isolation, and entirely devoid of "Post-Card"'s context dependence.

"Galimatas" is followed in turn by the album's master stroke, "Rock 'N' Roll Station". Comprising one of the most inexplicably beguiling five minutes and 22 seconds ever committed to tape, "Rock 'N' Roll Station" is a masterpiece of sublime, audacious economy. It's a track that has rightly been an object of obsession for *Nurse With Wound*, whose 1994 album bears its name. (Berrocal has also collaborated with

NWW on *Ostranerie* 1913.) On paper, "Rock 'N' Roll Station" is constituent elements make for a highly improbable match. Roger Ferlet provides a hypnotic, one-note bassline foundation for 50s rock 'n' roller Vince "Brand New Cadillac" Taylor who was the inspiration for Bowie's Ziggy Stardust. Taylor's fragmented, repellent lyrics, impossibly delivered with a softly galloped intonation, insinuate themselves like the coded messages transmitted through Jean Marais's car radio in Cocteau's *Orphée*. Meanwhile, Berrocal augments and accompanies them both on an upturned bicycle. But as the man says, "Rock 'n' roll station is a station where we can do what we want to do, everything is possible". Berrocal rings the bell intermittently and extracts a Mr McHenry whizzing sound from the wheels as they catch on the brake blocks. To this Taylor rightly responds, coolly and unperturbed, "Joe's bicycle is music to my ears". It is, of course, preposterous, surprisingly poignant and incomprehensibly transfixing. The version included here is leaner and even more economical than the *Fatal Encounters* version, and all the better for it. "Rock 'N' Roll Station" could only be followed by the more conventionally demanding "Bro A-Bac", a 24-minute huge ensemble work dedicated to the Futurist Russek, with its extended brass, strung, typewriter and mess tin percussion collages.

Throughout the 70s Berrocal maintained a prolific recording agenda while at the same time opting for a far from prodigious release schedule. And *Alpa Marghen's* very welcome reissue of *Parallèles* augments the album with four further selections from some negligently unused albums that Berrocal recorded between 1972 and 1979. These complement the original tracks with their forays into found sounds and tape experiments while leaving you to marvel at the idea of what might still be buried.

**Stephen Robinson celebrates the displaced theatricality of a French rock 'n' roll stationmaster**









more than he bargained for. When the possibility of a Taylor no-show presented itself mid-festival, Levescou deputised two of Canada's most renowned improvisers, pianist Paul Pimley and alto saxophonist John Oswald, to open for Crispell. Taylor's last minute arrival resulted in a delicious twist ending, a triple bill documented on the triple CD.

Insofar as this collection is a status report on Taylor's long shadow over his alleged stylistic progeny, Pimley is not well served by being paired with Oswald, whose wilting baritone rather emulates Pimley's moody lyrisms nor his masterly grace to the fore. Conversely, Pimley's genuine efforts to turn the dialogue into a game are met only with sullen wallops of basses and bays, as Oswald has an apparent doctrinal aversion to melody. Subsequently, essential facets of Pimley's approach are in surprisingly short supply in the three occasionally dazzling duets. In accommodating Oswald, Pimley repeatedly defaults to those components of his approach that are most directly linked to Taylor: bluesy, swerving improvises, jittery motives offset by ponderous bass octaves, and wail-like sweeps of the keyboard, punctuated by percussive clusters. Though Pimley's warp speed stride feel and sardonic humour occasionally gain traction in the sets closing solo piano sections, this is one of Pimley's more Taylorish performances on disc to date.

Crispell's well-structured set puts adequate distance between her sensibility and Taylor's. The seamless integration of her soulbearing lyrisms and her hard hitting intensity makes this a more compelling set than her comparatively fragmented mid-90s Music And Arts solo CDs. In an almost continuous performance, Crispell uses two contrasting methods to move between her predetermined materials. The first can be likened to a bumpy jump, where she plummets into the smothered depths of Michael Wead's "Prayer" or Annette Peacock's "Gesture Without Plot", only to be snapped skyward by, respectively, the riveting percussive passages of her "Hips, Pin T" and the romance of Wead's "Pars". The other is the type of slow crossfade she uses at the outset, where, over nearly three minutes, she slips from short-like phrases into the systems, hymn-like "Prayer". Overall, Crispell's set has the steady building thrust of a nearly perfect Dymck gymnastics performance, where the technical requirements are nautic with such effortless grace to require the prohibitive wallows to do more than just break a sweat.

Intriguingly, Cool Taylor forgoes the deliberate development of ballad-like contours and forbidding low register chords he has favoured since the early 80s. Instead, he immediately unleashes the arresting melding of line and attack that distinguished his earlier solo recordings. Elements from more recent work filter in quickly: rapid fire, mirrored lines, template-like syncretized phrases, shades to suggest genres ranging from reggae to desca, and a few voicings, highlighted by an interval of a fifth note. The lengthy opening movement last becomes a super collider for Taylor's signatures, as vintage devices like an ascending series of descending two note phrases and shattering clusters rooster off the lush lyrical kernels of his recent music. After nearly 40 mesmerizing minutes, Taylor abruptly stops to deliver a text, an alternately anachronistic and incoherent reading

scattered with squawks and growls. Though it is equally cogent, and contains one of his more beautiful elegiac themes of recent years (the performance is dedicated to the presumably departed Jimmy McDevitt), the second half of the performance is more episodic, see-sawing between impassioned outpourings and quiet reflection. It is a compelling performance, even by Taylor's singular standards.

## POLE

R -SCAPE SCORCE CD/ZLP

BY JAMES MUILEY

The apocryphal insect rhythm recorded by Stefan Betke as Pole is some of the most instantly recognisable electronics of the past few years. So recognisable, in fact, that last year's Pole 3 came treacherously close to creative stasis, at a moment when many of his glitch techniques were being adopted by the ubiquitous Clicks + Cuts masses.

Panaceally, on R-Scape backtracks to go forward. At the core of this interesting, slightly unsatisfying, 'work in process' collection are two tracks — "Raum 1" and "Raum 2" — recorded in late 1995 and eventually released as a 12" by Berlin's DM imprint in 98, taking their filtered pops and scintillations, their familiarly lulling echo deck effects as a starting point. Betke imagines an alternative musical development for himself, one that trends towards elaboration rather than reduction. His reworkings of "Raum 1" and "Raum 2" are followed by two complementary new pieces, "Raum 3" and "Raum 4", where the trademark stasis is reduced and a guitars, O Meteo, introduced.

Betke surgically deconstructs Meteo's playing until it has the tiny, gnawing quality of his usual rhythms. On the new version of "Raum 2", in particular, the collaboration is reminiscent of a cautiously funky Pluramon, or how Fennest's wonderful *Enfance Summer* might have sounded had he paid homage to the beaches of Jamaica rather than Southern California.

The impression that Betke is examining possible futures for his music is reinforced by the presence of two artists from his "scape label", Rumi Friedman and Kit Clayton, who produce remixes of the original DM tracks. Neither, sadly, surprise: Friedman adds feigning detailing, with guitar and vixes samples artlessly phasing in and out; Clayton amps up the ghostly house reverberations to ensure conformity to the current West Coast click house model. If Betke is concerned about becoming easily stereotyped, their contributions do little to advance his music.

Put together, R feels like a series of tentatively experimental 12"s more than the variations on a theme Betke envisaged. The guitar treatments apart, it leaves us no clearer to understanding how he can expand on his beguiling but, ultimately, limiting formula. A challenge for Pole 4 proper, undoubtedly.

## MICHAEL PRIME

ELEMENTS 1

MYCOPHILE SPORCS CD

O'ROURKE/PRIME/PRÉVOST  
ALPHA LEMUR ECHO TWO

MYCOPHILE SPORCS CD

BY PHILIP CLARK

Michael Prime describes himself as a 'sound ecologist' and works as a wildlife conservationist

in South London. Last year's *i-fields* CD used nothing less than the bioelectrical fields of plants as source material for electroacoustic composition, and in a similar way *Elements 1* treats the crackles and currents of fire and water. The most obvious reference point is Jannis Xenakis's use of burning charcoal noises in his *Concert PH* (1958). Prime's work has similar elemental facets which impress even my highly electrostatic ears.

If it's possible to divorce Prime's methods from his material, then it's surprising how heavily he relies on traditionally conceived musical rhetoric and how cleverly he disguises the fact he's doing so. The abb and flow of material in the water based "Surface Tension" even has something of the tension and release of traditional harmony, but this is music of extremes: the sounds often fragment into pure silence only to build to densely 'orchestrated' climaxes which are positively Mahlerian in their power. Unlike many of his colleagues, Prime doesn't bore us with technical descriptions of his knobs and widgets — his technology is a slave to his expressive imagination.

From fire, water and bioelectrical fields, Alpha Lemur Echo two concerns itself with the unlikely figure of Dave Brubeck. The 35 minutes of the opening "Lemur" are built on the recorded sound of Brubeck's voice, while later on in the piece, extracts from his 1959 Time Out are grafted into the texture. From a purely abstract and delicate opening, Brubeck's voice becomes increasingly clear through the haze of Jim D'Onofrio's guitar and Prime's electronics. I think I can hear Brubeck say 'Joe' (presumably a reference to his drummer Joe Morello; Eddie Prevost's drumming becomes increasingly jagged and paraphrases Morello's solo on the classic recording of "Take Five"). When the sound of Brubeck's famous piano vamp and Paul Desmond's alto saxophone emerge, we're in collage heaven, as this iconic material fades in and out of an ever shifting landscape. If it's a tribute, it's a cryptic one, but it is further proof of the critical music that Brubeck spawns. For the second and final track "Alpha", Prevost drops out, and Adam Bohman (on "strings, and objects") and guitarist Andy Hammond join for 17 minutes of music that is as pure as the first track is diverse. A beautifully voiced chord appears on the horizon and slowly spins around itself to reveal more of its corners. An unexpectedly exquisite end to an unusual and profoundly intriguing CD.

## JON ROSE VIOLIN FACTORY

HE TIE PRIME JAZZ DISCOURSE HD001 CD

BY JULIAN COWLEY

"We salute the agony and ecstasy of the former thousands of violin makers in the People's Republic of China!" The flourish is typical Jon Rose: crammed with ambient intention, the prelude to some wilful eccentricity. Out shopping in Sydney, Rose became enamoured of mass-produced Chinese violins, sold cheaply, many in time a habitual lampoon. Rose was delighted to find affordable instruments to modify and adulterate. On visits to China he tried to locate the factories where the violins were manufactured by the thousand, and discovered that their glory days were past. Violin Factory is his tribute to the instruments and the workers



### Arsonists

Date Of Birth

CD-ZLP 10 08 01



### Mr. Len

Fly The Fool

CD-ZLP 22 10 01



### Solex

Low Kick And Hard Bop

CD 10 08 01



### Thelin Zedek

Been Here And Gone

CD Available Now



### Techno Animal

The Brotherhood Of The Bomb

CD-ZLP 24 08 01

Live - 29.08.01 London Electroworks



## Soundcheck

who made them

The piece was performed in its full two hour form in December 1999 in a Viennese concert hall, simultaneously broadcast on Austrian radio, filmed to a video in Vancouver and transmitted on the Internet. The massed strings in Vienna played under the name The Orchestra Of Ancient Gods. Reese conducted and made electronic interventions. Kaffe Matthews added real time sampling and mixed. The voice of a Chinese factory gate was fed in. Tom Demeyer oversaw the visual components of the piece including video manipulation. In Canada, a children's Suzuki class attempted Vivaldi. Component sounds on the edited CD version range from the sawing of wood to the full blown grandeur of classical tradition. There are scored evocations of the charming robotic manufacturing process, powerfully realised, and celebrations of the instrument's flexible capabilities from bluegrass fiddling to avant garde obliqueness. Quirky in conception, *Vital Factory* is a serious and accomplished work, boldly imagined and brilliantly pulled together. Reese's taste for improbable juxtapositions and theatrical gestures is here channelled into a dynamic momentum. The result is arguably his most impressive recording to date.

### JOHN RUSSELL & ROGER TURNER THE SECOND SKY EMMANUEL 4055 CD

BY BEN WATSON

Five years ago, these two nonpareil exponents of guitar and percussion made a stunning record for Emarcm named *Birthdays*. If anything, this new one is stronger, funnier and

more decisive. It is a straight stereo mix recording, yet the way Russell and Turner use the capacity of digital for extreme sonic contrast and split-second dynamics suggests they've invested a new machine for editing music: *soft discs*. Muscle, imagination and witty spontaneity are so deftly in tune, they only need a 1930s big band guitar and a plectrum, a drumset and a midley collection of found objects to create twists and knots that have never before been heard.

Drummer Turner has long worked with singers, including Annette Peacock and Phil Minton, and even at low volumes his percussive raps and splatters pack the urgency and innuendo of their vocalists. Both players are so familiar with their chosen instruments that guitar and drum become prostheses, as immediate and expressive as mouth, larynx or lungs. Improvisation's refusal of genre entails reliance on elemental effects: if this music is inaccessable, it is because its detectors are too relied to credit an art made of direct physical shatter, spatter and sizzle.

Like the swing musicians who first employed his instrument, guitarist Russell has a strict internal clock, which gives the music an essential stability. Both players like to take a motif down to naughtiness, but these eruptions do not erase a sense of momentum. The way lines dip beneath the hearing threshold introduces a filmic sense of horizons, massive structures obliterated by mist. Occasionally, Russell allows himself a regular rhythmic guitar chime. Everything played resolves into melodic phrases: Charlie Parker's vocalised agility shone of any reference to jazz.

Russell and Turner keep their attention on the sonic actually never surrender to their

soundings. Everything is persistently tweaked and manipulated: there are none of the ooms and aahs of happy jamming. There is a delight in metric progressions: two beats over three, dotted syncopations, the halfbeat push to create unexpected ambiguity. Because both push their technique to the edge, they're as surprised by their own notes as those of the other. Turner's sensitivity to pitch means his tuned percussive fuses with Russell's notes.

Two minutes into "Dart", there is an astonishing embrace between bonging cymbal and twinging snare. Such moments are possible because Russell and Turner think along two tracks at once: they pursue rhythmic and melodic ideas with avidity, but hark to the total sound as well. A sudden mimicry will deal every analytic concept, yet preserve sonic continuity. They do not patronise listeners with prepared notes, but expect them to be as moved and grooved and swung as they are, to enjoy their perpetual turnarounds and subterranean as much as they do.

This music is full of the energies and structures of sound processes in the workaday world: capricious, mechanics, traffic, dishwashing, demolition. This approach opposes the notion of music as a higher, independent realm. The only reason it may sound abstract or difficult is because the rhythmic granularity is so advanced and fine. Compared to Beethoven or chart pop, it's an electro-musical image as opposed to a weedcut. Russell and Turner's sonic fencing is a cartoon for the ears. The idea that this species of improvisation is "haughty cerebralism" rather than packed entertainment demonstrates how most music has been colonised by farthings concerning social identity and star celebrity.

### SANDELL/LONBERG-HOLM/ ZERANG DISAPPEARED HUSKOPF CD1024

### CORBETT/LONBERG-HOLM/ MÜLLER TWOFOUR PENINSULA MUSIC P08 292 CD

### TERMINAL 4 TRUCKSTOP ALPHATRUCK/IC9 CD

BY DAVID KEENAN

Celief. David Lonberg-Holm is one of the major players on the new Chicago scene, and drummer Michael Zeranag has been his regular sparring partner across a whole slew of releases, their duo album *35 Grapes* (19 Shows) being a particularly choice document. On *Disappeared*, they're matched with Swedish pianist Sten Sandell, a veteran of that country's New Music scene. It's a scrappy disc, with the players too often falling into plink-plink call and response improv, although when they all dive in together on the closing measures of "New Two" it's exhilarating. Sandell's zany, mannered vocal interjections don't help matters.

Lonberg-Holm's two record with bassist Tomson Müller and guitarist John Corbett (an important Chicago jazz critic and all round inoperable force) isn't much better, although Corbett's playing is fairly lively, with fearful bursts of harmonics and light, snapping chords, no one really comes forward to take the session anywhere else. With all three of them occupying roughly the same tonal area, it becomes a bit of a scribbly mess.

Terminal 4, another aggregation that features Lonberg-Holm, is a very different prospect: a

# Size Matters

## 3", 7", 10" and other misshapes

On *Des Essences* and *Negru Voda's* *Sole 10"* (Fin De Siècle No Number 10) a couple of Cold Meat Industry offshoots get together for an old school industrial cut battle uptown. The best part of *Des Essences'* side features Magnus Sundström from The Protagorist crunching out dark machine funk while the Swedish Tron grows about the fact that beats are present. The Tron on the *Negru Voda* side has Peter Nyström from Magogorra maring edgy voices, clients and syrup in a way that recalls Clark Coolidge's poem cycle about Fiedt Collins's 1925 splunking accident. I mean, it's tight like that.

*Lapdog's* *Lapdogesque/Samar* (Yonira (Crawspace Artist Series 2.7.8") is the second release by two Auckland guitarists, Nick Vint (of Disclamer) and Peter Porteus (of both Postman and Electricity). In combo they are much more disruptive than they are solo, sounding something like a rowdy Alan Licht teasing lock-horns at the ghost of the young Sterling Marnson. And how those hoops do shine.

The Three imposters (Crawspace Artist Series

2.8.3XB") is another great release by the Durdent duo *Sandwich Lab Technicians*, composed of group compositions and also solo tracks by Nathan Thompson, James Kirk and Tim Cassarea. Some of SLT's recent recordings have seemed a bit over-engineered, but this three-pack of lures veers across many map points. There are parts where they pack their three-way cerebral inside of a sausage skin and allow it to balk and bust open on the sidewalk. There are other parts where the keyboard kazoot honestly recalls the space probing of Mr. Ra. There are other parts that are scorched combinations of everything that recall nothing at all.

More New Zealand weirdness comes in the form of Get A Dark Side Writing To Get You (NZ Synapse 2019C 7"), the second (or 3rd) by the *The Last Year*, a quintet, who sound as though they roam the countryside looking for piles of dirt to play. There are plenty of actual rock particulars – vocals, electric guitar, percussion and whetnot – but these lads are fitted together as though by moles (or some other burrowing creatures without the use of

possible tumbos). Shambole and riveting, this is the stuff that the term "post-rock" should be used to describe.

If you're not sapper of New Zealand yet, there's *Kiwi Music Sampler* (Crawspace SPACE9C 7"). Four artists representing the supposed highpoints of NZ's post-Ryting N scene are in the spotlight on the comp and the results are somewhat variable. *Pleasures* offers an odd bit of studio pop that recalls the more deranged experiments from the early exponents of the North Carolina Small Boys movement.

Fortably produce a sort of fuzzy park sound with 79 UK DIY helms. *The Brunettes* have a heavy breathing female vocalist and an approach that makes me think of the sound of underground British bedroom pop of the early 80s. *Matt Backhouse* is an inwardly directed singing punk whose pretty songs owe very little to the mumbles he namedrops. And there you have it: New Zealand Now!

Perhaps inevitably this month, *Negative 8* are a trio from Wellington, New Zealand. Their sound on the *Oceanography* label (Headsly No Number 8") is that of a guitar roaring gently through the rostrils of the right while a drum gets tapped and an oddly dewy key synthesiser wretches with dark hairs to free the frog. The drumming can sound a little lo-fi in the context of the whole, but who's looking?

On the same label look out for *Stefan Nettle's* *Wired Crab Holy Soldier/Goon*

*Gang/Gangueit* (Headsly No Number 7"), a release of a Stablas and The Rackett (late cut), the original of which never appeared anywhere I ever saw. Unlike his combed work with Pounce, this is a rather sparse and scattered collection of actual songs, with Nettle playing acoustic guitar and piano while singing as though there's a bumble stick in his eye. The results are reminiscent of some of the best material recorded in the early 70s by drug damaged UK folkies who ended up in Copenhagen and couldn't figure out how to get home. It's a master masterpiece of truly lost minimalism.

Winterstar (Season) *Veris/Moaks/All You Can Eat* (Shoma No Number 8") features nice longer folk lothe from Durdent under *Al Shama* who has at least one earlier release on the Yonira label. This one is sweetly uplaid acoustic guitar strumming with monochromatic vocals that get lost (at least on my stereo) and surface noise. Some might feel this is disappointingly disconnected, but as my pal Jack (a true devotee of late technology) has told me on numerous occasions, "it just adds to the mystery". And indeed, I have to agree with him. What on earth the second song has to do with the hair tonic of my youth (after which it is shed) is completely beyond me, but I've still not figured out what most of the best songs on the weird ESP look albums are 'about', so what the hell? Released by Byron Coley



quartet (with occasional vocals) with bassist Jack Abrams, guitarist Ben Vida and trombonist Jeb Bishop. The music is smoky jazz noir, at points drifting off into the more cinematic territory as Dave Douglas's *Chairs Of The Night* Sky group, while vocalists Timia Garteles adds some surreal cabaret glimmers.

**IGNAZ SCHICK & ANDREA NEUMANN**  
**PETIT PALE**  
ZAREK 05 CD

**KEITH ROWE & BURKHARD BEINS**  
**GRAIN**  
ZAREK 04 CD

**PERLONEX**  
**PERIPHERIE**  
ZAREK 07 CD

Berlin-based trio Perlone understand perfectly how to create improvised music which incorporates the controlled violence of industry. In earlier TV even made one reviewer nostalgic for '60s acid rock. Breaking out of the unbroken rules – in word repetition – in improvised music (in theory 'non-idiomatic' and open to anything, in practice far from it) percussionist Burkhard Beins relates his rhythmic cycles and ambient gestures, conjuring a wide variety of sounds from a relatively compact set, while guitarist Jörg Manja Zarek lays down a carpet of delicately pulsing resonance behind Schick's bank of Minidisk players, Decimex, FX switches and mixing desk. Events take their time to unfold during this live set recorded last December at the Institute Chaviris outside Paris. The music's slow heartbeat (Francisco López comes to mind), Zarek's painterly use of the guitar and Beins's mastery of the bowed cymbal often recall AMM, the reference for today's younger improvisers, it seems.

It comes as no surprise that to find AMM guitarist Keith Rowe teaming up with Beins on Grain, whose first track is one of Rowe's liveliest performances for several years. The second track leads him in more customary static mode, interspersing menacing drones with distressing high-end squeals, while Beins sounds like he's wailing while a distant thunderstorm eventually subsides into an eerie metallic calm. Beins's work is more about friction than percussion: his mastery use of polyphonic blocks and small stonks to create sustained tremors seems to have no precedent, except perhaps AMM's Eddie Prevost, of course. The final live track is a tour de force: at first Rowe seems content to lead from the rear, his radio emerging imperceptibly from behind a cloud of cymbals, before he gradually warms up and unleashes a volley of dazzling rattles and buzzes while Beins's close-miked bass drum cracks up the tension.

The six tracks on *Rest Post* feature Schick and Andrea Neumann playing her custom-built 'inside piano', which of course sounds nothing like a piano whatsoever. It's pretty difficult to work out who's playing what when Schick's Jan Man delay unit starts piling up samples and generating feedback cycles of crackles and hums. Edwin Pootley's observations on Neumann's *Charisma Album*, *Requiem*, with Annette Krebs (*The Wire* 2005) apply equally well here: both musicians seem to be as happy as kids in a sandpit scrambling around in their "electronic

minimalist rubble". It's engrossing stuff even if it seems to lack the pose that Beins brings to the proceedings.

**SCHLIPPENBACH TRIO**  
**SWINGING THE BIM**  
PMP 114/15 SXCD

German pianist Alex von Schlippenbach's long running trio with saxophonist Evan Parker and drummer Paul Lovens is everything jazz is supposed to be about: acrobatic pace, precise articulation at the speed of sound, and staggering technique married to pure instinct. *Swinging The Bim* is a wonderfully blurred snapshot of them in midflight, two sets over two discs from a gig in Amsterdam in late 1998. The group have been together for 30 years now so it's no surprise that the shape of the set is predictable to some degree – you wait in anticipation of the moment when Parker will surely part the piano and drums with minutes of solo revolving breath, and these inevitably staggering displays are dozed throughout. *Swinging The Bim* – but Parker counters any moaning about the non-infinite combinations of the random three by asserting that, while this music often celebrates the routine, it never indulges in the complacent.

It's telling that Parker heads off his elevenetists with a quote from saxophonist Steve Lacy: "Munk said: 'You have to raise the bandstand.'" *Swinging The Bim* barely lifts up from start to finish, if these players lost momentum, they would simply fall from the skies. Schlippenbach has a way of seemingly isolating every note on the piano, of constructing lines that coalesce of heavily weighted single notes rather than the tonal smears and great clusters of Cecil Taylor Live, he's always bent over the keys as if he's shortlisted, artfully watching his fingers prattle up and down the keys and muttering little singsong accompaniments. The only slightly frustrating aspect of his playing is the speed with which he changes through ideas, barely allowing Parker time to catch up before he's off somewhere else. No such problems with drummer Paul Lovens, who plays like Han Bennink with an attention span. He names that same jarkshop tramping energy that makes Bennink's performances so exhilarating to some seriously heavy and monomaniacally rhythmic rocking. Parker is on fantastic form throughout and this is certainly one of his best lyrical performances in a while, throwing out huge fiery performance licks that are so gorgeous they reduce Schlippenbach to simply pawing at them with little fluttering notes. One of the most remarkable passages comes near the end of the first disc where Parker cuts loose with a circular solo, dropping in all these ghostly undertones while key notes dance like fireflies round the margins. Schlippenbach just drops in two or three keys or each circuit yet it sounds like an orchestra cloudbursting through the heavens, every bit as psychotactically stimulating as minimalist composer Terry Riley's legendary all night Eights.

**IRMIN SCHMIDT & KUMO**  
**MASTERS OF CONFUSION**  
SPDM SPDM00A CD

BY LOUIE GRAY  
There's little doubt that Irmin Schmidt, or indeed his young sidekick, Jona "Kumo"

Podmore, are masters of confusion. It's just that they leave it to the very last track on their first album together to show just how confusing they can be. Recorded live at last year's Ars Nova Jazz Festival, "Either Or The Survivor" grows out of pulsing electronic beats with a sound and viciously that come from way down the bass cleft, before building into a vast, tensed structure in which the Can founder's keyboards and piano provide a kind of architectural figure, while Kumo's beat generation is as acute a process as three dimensional plotting. It's no exaggeration to say that these two do things in space.

To an extent, *Masters Of Confusion* declares an allegiance to the mission statement that Can never needed to make: to embrace a state of continuous experimentation, with whatever modes of production that technology may afford. So the pleasure here is the pairing of Schmidt's grand piano with the electronics of Kumo. And there's some improvisation across the album's eight instrumentals (three recorded live), it's difficult to work out exactly which musician is the more responsive. It's tempting to say that Schmidt sets the agenda – his jagged melodies, delivered at a frenetic tempo on "Goodfreaked Ballesteria" or "Burning Snow In Sky", are rather like the soundtracks to silent movies, hard to resist – but Kumo holds his own well, throwing out clouds of ambient sound and spraying beats with a playful accuracy.

Depending on one's tolerance for some of its more unambiguously 70s influences (the melodic sweeps that intone the sublime slack rhythms on "Beauty Day" in particular), the occasional folk who you know how precious fusion/crossover work can be. But it's soon allowed Schmidt's "Gentle Into That Night", an excerpt from his Gornemaght's opera, has all the vocabulary of Debussy's piano studies, while Kumo's background gurgles, here very sotto voce, summon up a blighted romanticism well. It's good to remember that it's in the collapse – and extension – of genres, of classical music, experimental or electronic, that both men work so eloquently.

**SMOG**  
**RAIN ON LENS**  
DOMINO WINGO CDUP

Bill Callahan's work as SMOG over the past decade has revealed little about him besides a capacity for cool observations of humanity that insouciantly banters, the detached storytelling, the slow and unfolding progression of his songs towards the grimly inevitable, the ability to sound dispassionate even when detailing awful events in the first person – all this has been the core of his ten compelling albums to date.

Songwriters who act as voyeurs rather than confessions are hardly original, of course: Callahan's most obvious role models, Leonard Cohen and Lou Reed, have long been skilled at coolly detailing the feelings of others even as they expect to stand in their midst. And initially, Rain On Lens appears to be more of the same. This time the title, analogous to fellow traveler Will Oldham's "I Am A Cinematographer", presenting the idea that a singer needs to be an actor as much as an actor. There's a song called "Live As If Someone Is Always Watching You", emphasising the sinister over the self-conscious.

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## Soundcheck

Clatter inspection, however, suggests Calahan is now fascinated by a notion of mitigated voyeurism. The lyrics of the title track run, "Rise on lens/Boom in frame/All is rumed/Let's call it a day," drawing attention to the artifice and mechanics in preference to the view. The following "Song" makes the conceit more explicit: "I'm a bit like the prophetic that feels in love with all the eyes that look through," he deadpans, "watching dark thoughts unfold from minor flaws."

If not quite an admission of culpability, it's at least a signal of engagement. Calahan finally conceding that the observer is as much a part of the action as the observed. In Smog's devious, unreliable universe, it's a notable concession. There's a fraction more emotional involvement elsewhere, too, especially in "Short Drive," which vividly describes a sexual encounter in new poetics that are closer to tenderness than his usual callous come-hithering.

With predictable centrality, though, the music is starker than ever. The smalté chamber arrangements of Jim O'Rourke (on 1997's *Red Apple Fall* and 1999's outstanding *Kick*) and the better producers enlisted by John Densmore (on last year's *Drugs Of Scavenger*) have been abandoned. Instead, Calahan produces himself, hooks up his linear narratives to a faster pulse than ever and employs yet another Chicago habitué, guitarist Rick Rizzo (Eleventh Dream Day, one of many duets with Tame Nine), to coax the skeletal tunes along. It's a hard, propulsive sound, occasionally — on "Nutritional Decline," for example — becoming almost triotonic, with Rizzo adding distant detaste and zoom reminiscent of Michael Rother.

Some things about Calahan never change: the brutal, ungenerous sense of humor, the pathological fear of sentimentality, the feeling that songwriting can be an exercise in extracting the maximum emotional response from the listener with the minimal emotional engagement of the artist — not a radical idea, exactly, but one that Calahan seems to use for sociological instead of commercial ends. Still, at the heart of *Rain On Lens* he comes closer to the first time: Smog is sincere, not omnipotent. Hardly a psyche stopped bare, but at least it's a start.

## SOLEX LOW KICK AND HARD POP

MATADOR/O'FAM CD

BY LOUISE GRAY

It's now been some three years since second-hand record dealer Elisabeth broke out of her Amsterdam shop, reinvented herself as Soles and began a parallel career as the boutique girl whose lo-fi approach disguised a sneaky intent. Actually, that's not quite true. Essex's still runs De C&D (jazz credits it as a source of many of her sounds), but it's clear that, for whatever playfulness, when her third album *Low Kick And Hard Pop*, there's far less left to chance than the whole notion of found sounds suggests.

It was 1998's *Solex Vs The Attenuator* that lay down the template for the subsequent *Pick Up and Now Low Kick*. Headgum samples from an extraordinary range of sources were threaded together into rhythmic tracks. Some Soles experiments were more successful than others, but part of their enduring strength was the music's temperament. One fret that she embraced any mistake as, to paraphrase Brian

Eno and Peter Schmidt, a hidden intention. Above all, there was pleasure to be had in the fact that Essex's went back to the basics of sampling technology, and in making a neat swerve away from unnecessary complication, actually arrived at a conclusion that asked as many questions as she set out to answer.

So the questions to be asked of *Low Kick* is: what is there? Where are we? 15 songs built out of a dizzying array of elements: A Nancy Sinatra bassline spins by, elsewhere there is a kind of exuberance you thought went off fashion with the B-52s. With drummer Robert Loggia's and guitarist Geert De Groet pressed into support, "Comely Row" and "Have You No Shame, Girl?" have an echo of surf punk or classic 60s girl pop (it's probably that wall of sound effect), even the Sits. Soles's multitracked voice produces a buoyant presence that floats the entire album. With such references there is a collapse of time inherent in her process. And yet, paradoxically, *Low Kick* could be of no other time than now. "Henry" and "Ease Up, You Fundamentalist!" build sophisticated waves into Soles's post-punk palette. As you might expect, there are glimmers as well: in the matchy flourish of "You Saw Purple, I Saw Aardvark" or the rumbling ball beat of the album's title track. *Low Kick* is a reflex action in the grain of the Prog rock tendencies of anyone who forgets what a studio's for.

## SPIRITUALIZED LET IT COME DOWN

ARISTO/SPACEMAN ARK/72 CD

BY HUA HUI

Twice upon a time, you could legitimately call Jason Pearce and Spiritualized the highest group in the sky. In 1997 they actually earned a place in the record books for playing on top of Toronto's ON Tower, the tallest man-made structure on Earth. The other time? Well let's just say that from 1982 to the present, Pearce and his cronies have been pressing for that perfect propulsion.

Consider the appropriately named *Let It Come Down* the rehab record. Legions of singers and players were drafted in to help the performance. But, none of the core members from 1997's breakthrough *Laces And Gentlemen We Are Floating in Space* dating back to his days in Spacemen 3. Pearce's giant tones have always felt like only the thinnest veil over keeping him in the living, breathing world. Melancholy and damaged but never quite suicidal or depressing, Pearce's vision for Spiritualized is ultimately one of redemption, the music's most for out gospel/soul quest. On the staggering (if not predictably poetic) "Won't Get To Heaven," he wails, "Lord I'm free/so lonely/I would've loved it while I could/So give me one more chance/And Lord I will be home for good." As his most sober release to date — he only talks about getting out — there's an interesting growth through the album. It starts awkwardly with the jarring, robust sound of "On Fire," going through some hackneyed, accelerated spins ("The Twelve Steps") and confirming that Pearce hasn't yet completely laid the habit. On "Out Of Sight" he explains, "Out of sight is always out of mind/I think out of mind is out of sight/was just looking for some peace of mind/I just couldn't find a place of mine."

But his astrological affliction — as well as a well-

publicized broken heart — gives way to serious contemplation, and Pearce ends up sounding as real and "human" as ever. The tempo unwinds and the songs grow slower, languid and more introspective. By the last four or five songs, Pearce is on his knees, decimated by love and hungry for faith. On the closing "Lord Who Hear Me?" he soberly surveys the shambles: "I lost about everything/Lord look what state I'm in."

As stress and misdeeds as it might sound, *Let It Come Down* suffers just a little from Pearce's presumably healthier outlook. Earthy but never quite psychedelic enough, Spiritualized still offer enough reily-binding religion to remind us that coming down is the hardest part.

## TARENTAL THE ORDER OF THINGS

NEURON PROMO CD

BY JIM IANNES

Throughout their brief career, San Francisco's avant-rock ensemble Tarental have pushed the art of listening to the point of perpetual immersion. Not only do Tarental constantly listen to how they sound and what their sound could mean, but they are also acutely aware of their relative position to their contemporaries and idols. Transfixed by the process of musical discovery, Tarental approach each recording, live gig and probably even rehearsal, as earnest attempts to capture the narcosis of some new form of beauty. If they can no longer get their fix in their pre-existing music, Tarental rewrite one of their songs, thus squeezing just enough of that initial high to keep going. When that fails, Tarental inevitably pull from outside their sonorous body. As a result, their first EPs synthesized US slowcore icons Low, Windsor For The Derby and Still, then they drew on the majesty of Goodspeed 's Black Emperor, The Heat and Mezzanine for their luminous debut album *From Bone To Satellite*; now they present themselves as a weird hybrid of Arvo Pärt, Jovianthence, and Radiohead on *The Order Of Things*.

The album opens benignly enough with "Adrian," upon which a plaintively persistent guitar strum introduces trumpet, synths and big tempo guitar which all patiently take their time in uttering their mournful sounds. After a near crash "I'm bum into an exceedingly melodramatic morass of cellos and post-rock bass noodling. Tarental signal a very distinct change in the progression of the record with a haunted loop of a Hindi female vocalist singing through shortwave. From here on, they step away from the majority of their instrumentation and foreground strings, leaving huge gaps in between their sonorous mantras or slowly evolving guitar drones, sustained melodies. There's also a guest vocal performance from Windy Allen. The Order Of Things serves for a breakneck tempo and then through a breakdown tremors applied with utter simplicity, either the triumphant crescendos which marked their previous album. While such facts are noble pursuits, Tarental never quite hit the mark, and probably would have done better to spend more time and money to further sculpt the last half of the album. *The Order Of Things* is not without merit, yet it should certainly be viewed as a cautionary tale for wide-eyed dreamers who believe they too can go into a studio without major label backing and create their own Ammass.

## TIMEBLIND

### RUGGED REDEMPTION

ORTHOLUX MUSIC/CR CRINE CD

BY PHILIP SHEERBURNE

Since 1993 Chris Sattinger has issued releases for labels like Communique and Kanteam that skirt the perimeter of dance music, teetering through Techno, electro and HiPop even as they wander far afield. Rugged Redemption sounds like its title — a rough 'n' tumble odyssey through dub-inflected effects and DSP-abused breaks.

The opening "Rastabamba" is essentially a remix of "Chronic Galactica" from his 2000 "Cataclysmic" EP for Drop Beat, but to the original's glancing dub chords and growling bassline he adds the unexpected element of a Jamaican DJ chatting in a thick patois about solar power. The vocalist's monologue sets up complex, interlocking oppositions between technology and Uddism, waste and substance, that echo the delicate balance of Timeblind's own sound, caught on the cusp of precision and chaos, order and slippage.

"Despense Now" checks a further array of reference points. Distorted breaks recall Techno Animal, while the hips and squelches that litter the midrange quote Two Love Soundz. More than any particular effect, though, Timeblind's music compares to those artists in its ambivalence toward genre's structure, fitting with established forms but refusing to settle down with just one. "Outburst" updates a standard dub bassline and onshot rhythm with grating bass clatter: "40 Acres, 20 Miles" takes a simple looping HiPop refrain (ostensibly similar to portions of RZA's soundtrack to *Ghost Dog*) and processes it to the point of collapse. This audio decay is even more pronounced in "Sweet Depression," where skipping notes and truncated percussion play off against fragments of free jazz and clouds of white noise.

On "Redemption," flickering chords and rough-hewn breaks cruise through phase and fange and delay. The metamorphosis suggests that the heart of the track is in the treatment, not the source material. Not a new lesson, perhaps — indeed, the idea's almost second nature to any student of Les Perry — but Sattinger returns it out with skill, in the process coming up with a record that sounds unlike anything else.

## TRIANGLES

MORAI M3 CD

BY WILL MONTGOMERY

The artwork for Triangles, released on Jim O'Rourke's Mokai label, is credited to Kevin Drumm and Swedish visual and sound artist Lef Egge. In the absence of any information on the sleeve or at Mokai's Website telling you otherwise, it seems reasonable to conjecture that these two are also responsible for the music. The album is an unrelenting mixture of drunks, scrapes, drunks, too, treated and acoustic guitar and electronic tones. The two pieces sound improvised and the episodes within them develop quite slowly. On the first track there's a good deal of multi-directional scuffling and spiky dodging around before the piece falls into place around a long drone. The second piece is even more diverse, with goofy acoustic strumming and piano intruding in places, alongside soft synth tones and snatches of voice samples



# The Compiler

New compilations reviewed, rated, reviled



Black British swinger, Ken Caillat/Steve Johnson

It's tempting to say that *laurelaphotographer* (Plan PLAN101 CD) is a let the blue (ie, the film, which I purposefully pay tribute, dazzling technique, a couple of great ideas but ultimately empty and concerned only with style. However, when *Anterior* started up his meditation on the 'reality' captured by the camera with gaudy smears of Swinging London decadence, at least the contributors here have the courage of their pretensions. You would need a degree in film studies to find the connections between sound and image on most of the tracks, but Richard Young's acoustic and airy "1968" does intimate some of the consciousness of the film, Dean Roberts's "A Yard Of Birds" is a nose piece no doubt constructed from detuned samples from The Yardbirds' appearance in the film, and Morris goes *Anterior* in his complicity with their usual fun on "Despite Its Aesthetic Advances, In Its Policing Of The Sexuality Of Public Space Anterior's Film Personality Masquerade And Homophobia." William Peres, Loren MacCane Connors, Gorgon, Arjan Doyle and Sun City Girls may or may not engage with the film, but they still sound pretty good.

A sense of contribution to some Bizarre's ability to gunk up and develop the best of the deviant currents around, if not of its original self-assured licence to transgress, permeates the label's latest compilation, *IV Rather Shout At A Returning Echo Than Kid That Someone's Listening* (Some Bizarre SB2042 CD). There are some familiar names here (notably Richard H Kirk in the guise of Sander and Orchestral Manoeuvres and Soft Cell in no other apparel than their own), but the stars are Karl and Egil. Karl's upfront "Walk On Water" as a piece of latent psychedelic rock, Phanning, but their "Rescue", a sort of Dribb/teen song-era production, with flanged electric sounds, speeds the thing into hyperspace with a quick leftfield turn past some falling heads over Remains is Light. The islandish, oddball Egil (from the same Bad Taste stable that nurtured the Sugarcubes) specialises in a little busyness, where bleeps, cheap synths and

guitar riffs make up songs of disorientating edginess and uncertain moods. On "I'm Not 100% Reliable", there's a brooding, high volume charge straight out of a John Carpenter soundtrack. It's easy and annoying to be outstruck by Kai Mista, whose "Looks Like More Fucking Rain" displays a fine understanding of adolescent delivery and little else, but something sweetly sinister ripplies through the evolutionist rap "Picture This". The big draw, however, is the reformed Soft Cell's first recording in 17 years is "God-Shaped Hole" worth the wait? Hard to say. Maybe because we've grown used to Marc Almond's wonderful hysterics or Dave Ball's programming for The God and others, but the song still resonates itself in the duo's recollectable way. All the old elements are still there: pulsing electric beat, squiggly organs and a touch of Acid bassline. You also get the knowing steel of Almond's voice ("I'm the desperation of a twisted star") and lyrics about celebrity excess. That he pulls off a line about crawling around in sewers is a thrill all old *Calimatis* will recognise.

The tracks collected on *Format 5* (fourteen TROCK CD) were originally designed for a sound art festival to fill the central room of the baroque Parochial Church in Berlin. Even though your home probably doesn't have symmetrical apses or an open roof truss, the barely-there blips and beeps of Frank Bretschneider's "Round", the heaving, maggot swarm of "Signal Defects" by Signal (Bretschneider, Dolf Bender and Cassen Nicolai) and the down chorus gongal synthesis of "17:14" by Golden Lone (Fenners and Zettlman) will probably do as well.

*BitStreams* (Whitney WDK6 CD) collects soundtracks from the Whitney Museum's digital exhibition of the same name (late 1990s) and is unfortunately the 'usual suspects' fest (Jim Thirlwell, Paul D Miller, Stephen LaBrie, John Herndon, O Gnee, Supper Taster), etc) is only reinforced and embossed by the weak, the same people asking the same questions and finding the same answers. The only compositions that deviate from the electro-nom and stizzle are tracks that

sample 'real' instruments like Andrea Parkins's "Freak Cloud Idem", Elvise Shave's "Crydell Fragments" and an excerpt from Brian Conley's "Worl" Serbia Vs United States, an imaginary conflict using only cartoon noises as weapons.

Coming with the tagline, "The African Diaspora's Contribution To England's own jazz of the 1930s and 1940s", *Black British Swing* (Topic TS781 CD) puts the spotlight on a neglected part of Britain's jazz history. Although the colour line really came into effect post-Windrush, between the Depression and post-World War Two demob, short of getting a chair with one of the top-notch bebop bands, it was hard going for swing's hep musicians of whatever colour trying to go pop. While some of the musicians here traded on exotica value or echoed Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw and Glenn Miller (Ken Snakehips Johnson's "Bambo Junction" and the heukum of "Give Me My Runch"), hearing Cyril Blake And His Japs Club Band reminds how often "Ory's Blues" must have sounded in 1941: his music needs to be integrated into Britain's jazz history.

Run by Düsseldorf and friends, Sonic Mask Experiment has brought a dose of Brighton promiscuity to London's stale club scene. *Sonic Mask Experiment* (Hub HUB001 CD) recreates the experience for the home listener with a collection of electro feedback overload without regard for the source, as you get Suicide, Fat Tuckers, Acid H to (X) and, God forbid, Earl Brutus all playing rubber ducky in the same analogue bubblebath.

Soul Jazz has struck gold again with the excellent *Saturday Night Fish Fry* (Soul Jazz SR53 CD/LP), the second volume of their New Orleans funk and soul series. With classics from the Meters, Lee Dorsey, Eddie Bo, The Wild Magnolias, Irma Thomas and Huey "Piano" Smith, this volume is less of a revelation than the first, but no less an essential compilation of funk from the city that started it all. *Blue Orleans* (EMI/Blue Note 534140 CD) compiles the prehistory of New Orleans funk with classics and

old war horses from Fats Domino, Ernie K Doo, Slimmy Lewis, Jesse Hill, Chris Kenner, even Sam Buzza. You should own most of these already, but if you don't, this is as good a place to start as any.

*Rauschschiff Monika* (Monika MDNKA20 CD), the latest compilation from Gudrun Gut's label, revisits recent releases from Barbara Morgenstern, Quarks, Contra and Kornel and provides an appropriate soundtrack to wild Indian summer days. Two previously unreleased items are revelations: Contra's reworking of Depeche Mode's "The Things You Said", which is transformed from a lugubrious synth drone into rough-hewn, guitar driven pop; and pre-teen rapper Rissa saucily and savily weighting the pros and cons of the male species to Zigartenschrauch's scorched beats on "Manner" - the best reason since 30s satirist Kurt Tucholsky or Max Galka (formerly of Foyer Des Arts) to sign up for a German course.

The roots music upon which The Grateful Dead built their reputation also provided them sustenance throughout their long trip. Strangely, Country blues seemed more distant in time back in 1966 than it does in the new century. The only way to acquire the music in the early 60s was asking your neck in a travel through the southern States knocking on doors for old 78s. Now labels like *Cash* make it easy for armchair ethnomusicologists. *The Roots Of The Grateful Dead* (Cash KATCD193 CD) follows recent collections on the inspirational sources of Presley and Dylan - both exceptional sets. This one is right in step, even though the idea to disinter the Dead's roots was initiated a few years ago by Shanachie's *The Music Never Stopped*. Self-respecting blues lovers will inevitably possess Son House's "Walking Blues", Stevie John Estess's "Someday Baby" and all the other landmark recordings located here, but this album's real design is to lure lost Deadheads back home to where it all began. *C* Reviewed by Steve Barker, Natalie Gravestock, Louise Gray, Ken Hunt and Peter Shapiro



## Soundcheck

The album is defined by its hostility to genre, taking down both laptop and conventional improv. Movement appears to be its main ambition and it has an appealingly random, provisional quality. The listener never knows whether a particular sound event is going down the sonic playground and into the mulcher, or whether it's going to recur. Over a few hearings, it's the scattered arrangements of sonic details that most pull the ear, particularly during the album's first few minutes. To add yet another effect, it opens with the erotic movement of small sounds, like an army of insect irregulars marching through clouds of static. When the piece settles into a pattern, the sounds used are sharp-edged and uncompromising. Less persuasive are the gender tensions that the second piece — after moments of noisy gutturalism — eventually contents itself with. An awkward, jagged release, nonetheless.

### EDGARD VARÈSE

AMERICUS  
CD/BOX SET CDMMPHON 47137 CD  
BY PHILIP CLARK

It's probably a by-product of the aging process, but as conductors reach their decade they have a tendency to slow down. The new recording of Varèse's orchestral music by Pierre Boulez and The Chicago Symphony Orchestra was made in 1996, when Boulez was 71 — not that old for a conductor, but these ponderous performances feel too much like an old man's perspective on a young man's music. Anyone on intimate terms with Boulez's 1970s recordings of Varèse with The New York Philharmonic, checking his astounded 1977 version of *Americanes* against this new one, will hear there's no comparison. The spontaneous intensity of the earlier New York version is superhuman, and the wild abandon of its conclusion dances in your head. The strong and hard sides heard near the start of the piece are serene and have the otherworldly quality that Varèse intended. However the same strong and hard writing in this latest version only succeeds in scuffling awe and decorative. It's too obviously in the "impressionist" tradition of Debussy and early Stravinsky. Although this was Varèse's aesthetic starting point and the score is undeniably saturated in that soundworld, *Americanes* was a bold step to a more muscular music that reflected the rowdy and exhilaration of the composer's move to America. To pretend otherwise is a fabrication.

If his performance of *Americanes* is merely wrongheaded, then Boulez's use of *Déserts* is perverse. Although for reasons of practicality Varèse did allow the piece to be performed without its electronic component, there can hardly be any excuse for doing so these days — especially when you're recording for Deutsche Grammophon and have spent a good proportion of Dutch GNP establishing a career for electronic music. I'm still scratching my head trying to work out why Boulez erases the electronics here. It certainly doesn't do the piece any favours, and its performance is awkward and slow, very unlike Varèse.

Arrange a performance worthy of the Boulez pedigree, but the perquisition piece *Ionisation* is flabby and routine. One reviewer in a UK newspaper expressed surprise that these recordings were not being issued now. I can hardly get a guess as to why. As Boulez increasingly

turns his attention to Mahler, Bruckner and Schubert, Varèse simply doesn't appear to be his bag anymore.

### VARIOUS

#### REWITTING THE BOOK

ELISE AND JACK EAGLETON 3XCD  
BY ANO CHAPPELLE

Japanese noise artist Aube's 1998 album *Pages From The Book* (reviewed in The Wire 176) took a copy of the Bible as its sole sound source. *Else And Jack*, a label run from both Grand Rapids, USA, and Hatfield, UK, sent a group of remixers a set of 61 samples from that project and this is the result. The packaging is great, the mastering is superb and each disc is intelligently programmed. The remakes are mostly down from the US and the UK, but also include Aube himself, Merzbow, and French musician Brume.

The first disc starts in a downbeat mode interspersing until it reaches the tracks by Merzbow and Flutter, who tear and rage. Relief comes with two beautiful, quiet pieces from Wheaton Research, and the disc ends with a quirky garage track from Hood. The second disc follows a crooked version of the same path that leads eventually to V/V/V's tumbling arhythms. Duro Operating System captures a trio of pieces which develop a firm, increasingly aggressive atmosphere until a muffled heartbeat rhythm fills them and disappears. Things calm again down with Phosphene's luminous, chattering "Netbachu-dwaz".

The original concept might have mostly disappeared, with the only surviving, widely shared sounds being a few crumples and tearings of Bible pages, but an overall feel still binds the compilation.

### TREVOR WISHART

#### VOICEPRINTS

EMF 000 CD

BY JUDAN COMLEY

It's no surprise to find a CD of electroacoustic pieces by English composer Trevor Wishart taking the human voice as their principal point of reference. He has previously written *Antrocos* (1980) for the group Singcircle and *Vox Cycle* (1989) for Electric Phoenix. His engagement with speech as a musical phenomenon has long been clear, it's consistent with the human dimension that is apparent even when technological mediation in his work is most pronounced. In that respect he invites comparison with the widely respected American composer Paul Lansky. The compositions on *Voiceprints* span 20 years.

In 1979 he issued an album featuring Merage, a quirky, unclassifiable audio exhibition, and *Beach Singularity*, a seaside extravaganza conceived to be staged among dorky neds and Punch and Judy shows. In 1997 those pieces reappeared on a Partridge CD with an additional track, an improvised solo by Wishart called *Wetstone*. In a sleeveless he wonders, "When exploring the furthest reaches of the human voice for many years and I'm particularly interested in the glottal and vocal sounds — the way one type of sound can transform smoothly into another, completely different type of sound." He further remarks that his interest in computer music has the same basis.

Anna's Magic Garden (1982) is the earliest

piece on the new collection. A young girl's voice undergoes metamorphosis and is plunged into a sonic wonderland conjured from processed pop, guitars, elastic bands, scaffolding pipes, fruit being eaten and other unlikely sources. On *Blue Tulpas* (1994) an octogenarian's recollection of a curious dream is subtly modified. American *Tuphu* (1999) reconstructs the iconic voices of Martin Luther King, Neil Armstrong and Elvis Presley to trace the contours of faith in liberty, progress and pleasure. *Two Women* (1999) anatomises late 20th century Britain by embalming and pulsing the voices of Margaret Thatcher, Princess Diana and Ian Paisley. The prize-winning *Tongues Of Fire* (1995) uses computer tools to penetrate the heart of human utterance. The technical skill is obvious, but Wishart also manages to convey excitement at the processes of discovery that technique opens up.

### SUSUMU YOKOTA

#### ZERO

REBUBLE/EXCEPTIONAL EX0102 CD/LP

### KEN ISHII

#### FLATSPIN

EXCEPTIONAL EX0103 CD/LP

BY MATT FRYTCH

Two from Japan's leading House and Techno DJs. Yokota's output has been covered in The Wire recently in terms of his more abstract forays beyond the perimeter of the Japanese club scene. Zero gives a glimpse of the style he's better known for in Japan. Imagine House music, having embled out of Chicago, disappearing through a cyber conduit and re-emerging in a futuristic dance lounge in Tokyo 15 years later, full of honeyed, liquid colours, and reverberating in an irregularly shaped perfume bottle. In fact, Zero sports a cover photograph as if the album really was a Christian Dior concoction, set in a glossy and golden atmospheric aspic. The music is supple and alluring, plaintive synth melodies, cutting into occasional peaks of honeyed ambience, shaped around pared basslines and steadily pumping kickdrum beats. Never quite steamy and dusty, or tensely robotic, this music balances its futuristic melodic magic (flutes and violins make an appearance) with a chic remoteness: the beats more exact and inorganic than any heartbeat, while soul diva voices invoke sensuality from some distilled blissful stratosphere, asking, "Could heaven ever be like this?". "Life Up" adds snapper jazz organ touches and a swinging, vibrant feel, while on "Space Zero" Max Berrina peppers the beat with rapping bass work beneath Hausman Druim's ecstatic, feverish cyber-soul vocal.

Ken Ishii's *Flatspin* is an altogether more ebullient and combative affair, as titles like "teebin" and "Grob A Attack II" might suggest. Ice is reference to the Japanese film *Whiteout* (a mountain rescue and terrorism schoolbuster) for which some of this music provides the soundtrack. But it also suggests Ishii's masterfully cool, crisp and bewitching way with rhythms and clashing but counterpointed sounds. Medleys of different effects — percussive flairs and waps — dance synchronically across stent walking beats and restless hi-hats. "Invincible" plays with drills, "Drums In Fiction" samples Koda's drumming, while "Gap Accelerator" lifts motifs from Yonita's reworking

of Scaviness's *Firebird Suite* — an terse, erotic fumes of sound against an impenetrable Techno pulse. Although a series of brief segments called "Flatspin Loops" step more brazenly onto experimental jungle terrain, compacting rhythms out of morphed vortices of sound, Ishii equally opens the album out into more reflective moods. "Mnago" is more slow rolling with piano strokes and a lyrical motif somewhere between a tremor and a Chinese flute. Thinking more in its skilful juxtapositions than in its adrenaline drive, *Flatspin* manages to touch a rewarding range of nerves, yet remains remarkably coherent.

### OTOMO YOSHIHIDE'S

#### NEW JAZZ QUINTET

##### FLUTTER

TZADIK TZ2020 CD

BY JIM HAYNES

In all likelihood, Otomo Yoshihide conceived of his New Jazz Quartet as a tribute to his Japanese free jazz heroes of the 1970s. Otomo has been vocal in his nostalgia for the "Jazz Nissai", the mostly ethnic cafes which defined cool for 70s Japanese youth with an ample supply of manga, comics, jazz journals, *Bam Bam* films and, of course, a steady stream of Charles Mingus, Ornette Coleman, Eric Dolphy and sometimes Derek Bailey or Evan Parker. At one of these cafes in Fukushima during the mid-70s, Otomo got the opportunity to see the late saxophonist Kaoru Ake, whose last life and young death by overdose, on top of his impassioned blowing, made him one of the most influential artists in Japanese free music. After witnessing Ake's improvised showcase of alto and tenor sax, as well as guitar feedback, Otomo came to the realization that he too could do something like it.

Harking back to the delicious excess found in *Plays Standards* by his earlier group Ground Zero, The New Jazz Quartet is an amalgamation of solid free jazz chops and the crystalline serene minimalism that is currently being exported from Japan at an ever-increasing speed. The ensemble lines up a number of heavy hitters from the Japanese free jazz scene including Kenta Tugami, Nanyuh Kikuchi, Hiroaki Matsuda and Yasuhiro Yoshigaki. Also present are former sampler player Sachiko M and Masahito Masami Aika, guesting. Despite all this talent, *Flutter* starts shakily with the title track, which sets the jazz veterans weaving their instrumentation with all of the prowess of an Ornette Coleman/*Don Cherry* duo at one pole, and the noxious unwavering squalor of Sachiko M's snarles at another. On this track, neither camp appears overly interested in making the effort to collaborate, both simply do their thing independently of each other.

But the rest of the album shows a marked improvement, with the noise elements emerging as twining addendums to the hoped-up, beeping grooves and the complex entanglement of clashing consonances, as the quartet work through compositions by Eric Dolphy, Greg Mulgan and leader Otomo. The highlight of *Flutter* is the closing medley of Mulgan's subtle "Night Lights" and Otomo's wonderfully abstract "Desire", which is laden with the crackle of run-out grooves, a new gentle Sachiko M modulating her snarles, sustained organ, loose basslines and very slow, smoky sax solos. □



# The Boomerang

New reissues rated on the rebound

Although they are tagged as part of the 60s "Paseley Underground," LA's **The Dream Syndicate** were heading in a different direction from their kieran contemporaries. They featured Steve Wynn (guitar, vocals), guitarist Karl Precoda, bassist Kendra Smith and former Los Angeles Free Music Society session man Dennis Duck on drums. This mixture of the bohemian and the avant garde—laced with Wynn's freedy lyrical lode and Precoda's Velvet Underground noxious guitar journeys—marked the return of their first album *The Days Of Wine And Roses* (R122/1993 CD), an important event. Rather than merely ape the psychedelic jangle of the 60s, the Dream Syndicate created a series of dark, hard-driving, feedback-enhanced, yet carefully arranged garage rock symphonies that stuck in the head rather than the craw. Complete with bonus tracks culled from the group's debut EP and the "15 Minutes" 45, plus revealing booklet notes by Wire contributor Bruce Smith, this is a fine opportunity to (re)discover a lost masterpiece.

The Dream Syndicate went on to record their second album with groov producer Sandy Pearlman. Pearlman is best known as one of the brains behind Heavy Metal levitations **Blue Oyster Cult**. Before hitting it big with "Don't Fear The Reaper" from Agents Of Fortune (Columbia/Legacy 502237 CD), BOC were cranking out a brand of intelligent Metal that (via the occult teachings of the Stooges and The Byrds at their blackest than Led Zeppelin. The group's rejected early work, dating from when they were called **Stalk-Forrest Group**, have been disinterred and released as *St Cecilia: The Electric Recordings* (Rhino Handmade RHM27716 CD). Perhaps it was their tendency to sound a bit like The Doors that attracted Elektra, but the designed feel of "What Is Quicksand," "Arthur Comes," "Donovan's Monkey" and "Curse Of The Hidden Men" obviously scored the label off. Although a fine album, the Stalk-Forrest recordings only partly

nod towards the rock monster BOC became.

Instead Blue Oyster Cult signed to Columbia. Their first three albums cortize their most vital work. **Blue Oyster Cult** (Columbia/Legacy 502234 CD) amplified and deconstructed the upbeat psychedelic throb that built through the Stalk-Forrest recordings, replacing it with a black-edged Metal attack that latched on with "Tinseltown MC" and their scorching on "She's As Beautiful As A Foot." The Stalk-Forrest song "I'm On The Lamb" reappears with attitude as "I'm On The Lamb But I Ain't No Sheep," on *Blue Oyster Cult*, and again as "The Red And The Black" on their second album *37 Rooms In Hell* (Columbia/Legacy 502235 CD), an anguished, hell-bent rock 'n' roller coaster ride to Hell and back. Even better is *Secret Treaties* (Columbia/Legacy 502236 CD), a World War Two concept album with HP Lowcraft overtones, where a rock concrete collage of buzzing planes, falling bombs and Nuremberg rallies was incorporated into this intensified Metal mesh of resuscitated melody and improvised guitar funk.

In the wake of the Bronx Clio/Thursdays Moore compiled *JazzActual* box set, Italian label Get Back has started to reissue the BYG/Actual catalogue. Available now is *Volume 15*—Anthony Braxton (Get Back GET315 LP), the first of two albums **Anthony Braxton** recorded for the label. He's joined by trumpeter Lee Smith, violinist Larry Jenkins and drummer Steve McCall on a composition that, like many of Braxton's diagrammatically titled pieces, involves multiple changes of tempo, mood and atmosphere. Along with Milford Graves's album for ESP-Disco,

**Andrew Cyrille's** *What About?* (Get Back GET316 LP) is one of the greatest free jazz percussion statements ever recorded, with Cyrille unleashing a myriad of fresh and entrancing shapes and styles from his kit. The best of this batch, however, is pianist **Dave Burrell's** *Echo* (Get Back GET320 LP), a cascading avalanche from Archie Shepp, Alan Sills, Sunny Murray, Grotchen Mencher II, Clifford Thornton and Arthur Jones. Long before they performed Soft Boys covers

with Debbie Gibson, the **Cirque Jexis**, formed by ex-Black Flag singer Keith Morris and former Redd Kross guitarist Greg Henson, were one of the more understated California hardcore groups. Their 1980 debut *Group Sex* (Frontier 31002 CD) features such crucial cuts as "Paid Vacation" (their "Holiday in Cambodia") and "Penetration" ("I had an operation, a statement of our times/They led my balls together, what's inside's not alive"), and showcases a group who may not have been as good as Black Flag, or MDC even, but were snotter and thrasher than either.

**Flippers**, on the other hand, didn't mask their shiften with jock-jawing schoolboy pranks; instead, they slowed down the tempos and ground out a bruising, malevolent, gutter post-psychic. *Blow'n Chunks* (ROR RUS 8271 CD) was originally a cassette from 1984 that captured the group live at CBGB's in 1983. While ROR has thoughtfully included some i.e. i.e. bonus tracks, this remastered edition still doesn't quite capture Flipper's live ferocity, with their mark just sounding muddier rather than menacing. Still, "Shed No Tears" is priceless.

Happily, this is the last time Sha Na Na will be mentioned here, but in the early days they used to show stages with J. Punsly Branch's Afro-funk group **Oneness Of Juju** at Columbia University. *As African Rhythms: Oneness Of Juju 1970-1982* (Strut STRUT018 CD/2XLP) shows, however, there was no nostalgic 50s recommitment here, just funk/disco grooves sprinkled with polyrhythms and cosmic spirituality. The best tracks are the Afro-jazz numbers from the group's *Strata East* period.

African grooves with a more laidback feel can be found on the excellent retrospective of the great **Orchestra Wivi**. *Vintage Verclays* (RetroAfrica RETRO15 CD). Leader Verclays is one of the titans of Congolese music, a former Franco associate whose experimentation of the region's folkloric rhythms like the *cazouza* was largely responsible for the soulful beat which followed. The ten tracks here date from the early 70s and are magnificent, upful rhythm zephyrs, superficially

mellow but so insinuating that you won't notice that you're winding your waist.

The unrepentant budget price artwork that packages **Eddie Palmieri's** *Salsa Caliente De Autor!* (Nascente NS084 CD) obscures an excellent collection of tracks from the bad boy of Bronx salsa. From the mid-60s onward, Palmieri was on a mission to demystify salsa's generic conventions by flooding his music with outside influences: modal jazz, R&B, psychedelia, extended compositions, indigenous island rhythms and folklorisms. However, compiler Roger Armstrong seems to regard these experiments as the eccentric musings of a wayward talent, which means this compilation includes no tracks from the pianist's greatest records. Sordido and The Sun Of Latin Music. Instead, it showcases the kind of laser-precise, bullet-hard salsa that made up the bulk of Palmieri's recordings through the 60s and 70s. That's no bad thing, as Palmieri's groups exalted those of James Brown and Fela Kuti in generating percussive-heavy dance grooves that were loaded with such tension they could send you to the bank of hysteria.

**Phil Cohen And The Artistic Heritage Ensemble** (Arcadium AES 1 CD) contains one of the most idiosyncratic takes on 60s avant jazz this side of San Ra. The extended interview with **Phil Cohen** in *The Wire* 207 told the full story behind this music, but it's worth repeating that Cohen's project was draped in the same arcane cloth as Ra's. "The Minstrel" and "New Frankophone Blues" are built on ragged boogaloo rhythm tracks made strange by Cohen's Frankophone, an amplified thumb piano that rattles spookily around the other instruments. Likewise, the two takes of "Unity", a straight ahead modal blues, are teleported to other planes of being by Cohen's customised violin one, Charles Handy's Chinese musette and, on the live version, Pete Cosoy's amazing guitar solo, an aboriginal starburst that predates his work on Miles Davis's *Agharta* by seven years. □ Reviewed by Harry Harrison, Edwyn Pouncey and Peter Shapiro

Left: Leo Smith, Steve McCall, Larry Jenkins and Anthony Braxton; right: The Dream Syndicate's Steve Wynn





# Avant Rock

Reviewed by John Mulvey

## AMP SAINT CECILIA SINSEMILLA SPACE AGE RECORDINGS 01897027 CD

Amp's very electronic reconfiguration of bliss rock is captured on this collection of mainly live recordings from a 1999 European tour. Richard Walker's cluttered sound designs are at times more aggressive than one might expect from a group who have recorded drift music for the likes of Kraken and Darla, occasionally trespassing on Third Eye Foundation's territory. Amp are less radical than TLE, however: in spite of the overloading electronics, this recalls a mediocre My Bloody Valentine support act from the late 80s. The feeling is compounded by Kamee Chaka's traumatised Goth vocals, sadly more memorable than the passages of relative incoherence that surround them.

## DANIELSON FAMILIE FETCH THE COMPASS KIDS SECRETLY CANADIAN SC45 CD

As an art rock collective to the whiny post-punk currently prevalent in US mainstream rock, Danielson Famille's pretensions hardly make their quirkiness any more tolerable. A Christian family from New Jersey, their cult position in American underground circles stems from lead sibling Daniel using their performances for his theses at art school. If nothing else, then, Fetch The Compass Kids proves the lo-fi community — Steve Allen, who produces here, included — remain grateful to a kind of creepy incoherence: songs like "Let Us ABC" usher in a nightmare vision where Jai Far and Daniel Johnston have taken over Sesame Street and the Muppets are darlings of the avant garde.

## VINCENT GALLO WHEN WARP WARP 01 CD

In spite of all the hype that surrounds his temperamental, chameleon and allegedly boundless talent, Vincent Gallo's career as a literary Renaissance man remains frustrating. This debut album follows a similar trajectory to the first film he directed, *Buffalo 66*: genuinely odd and affecting in places, absurdly self-regarding in others. When mainly pasty Gallo (a former groupmate of Jean-Michel Bosquet in Garg) as a tortured singer of drab, drab folk songs, loose solo demos possibly inspired by the reveries of Tim Buckley, the intimacy feels utterly dissonant, but occasionally all the effort he scrupulously tries to hide pays off. A few meandering instrumentals are less successful, sacrificing substance for atmosphere and sometimes sounding like a sub-standard My Wax 12" from the mid 90s.

## REBECCA GATES THE RUBY SERIES BADMAN B998 CD

Rebecca Gates spent most of the 90s fronting The Sparrows, one of the less strident (and less successful) groups who figured in the Pacific Northwest rock explosion. Now solo, she's accompanied on The Ruby Series by a bunch of

Chicago musicians, produced and led by the perennially productive John McEntire. The sound may have evolved to sophisticated orchestrated avant pop with tasteful electronic trim, but Gates's songs remain broadly similar: subtle, Herbie and occasionally Country tinged. It's well crafted stuff, of course, and sleekly unaffected compared with the posturing of many of the acoustic centred solo artists this month. Ultimately, though, the same problem that hamstringing The Sparrows remains. Everything is pleasant, nothing is terribly memorable.

## DAVID GRUBBS THIRTY MINUTE RAVEN RECTANGLE AC3 CD

Ironically, David Grubbs appears to be taking a similar path to that of his longtime collaborator Jim D'Anjou's Happy Days. He investigates a single guitar theme (in this case plucked from an old Grubbs song, "A Pair Of Ravens") over the course of a much longer piece. Thirty Minute Raven is, in fact, more complex and unexpected than that. It moves from the predictably Fahey-ish guitar figure to minimalist Mega-style laptop skronk, stark electric nattering by Grubbs and Noel Akchotté and a feedback mimicking to sax break by Quentin Rollet. The near constant ticking rhythm (led in part by John McEntire at the kit) holds the disparate parts — a virtual compendium of current avant/free fashions — together impressively.

## MOGWAI KICKING A DEAD PIG CHEMICAL UNDERGROUND CHEM057 2XCD

**MOGWAI  
EP+8  
CHEMICAL UNDERGROUND CHEM054 CD**

In the wake of the group's move to the Southport label, Mogwai's former home, Chemical Underground, have judiciously delved into the back catalogue to find Kicking A Dead Pig, a remix compilation first released by Eye Q in 1998. As a document of post-rock's tentative overtures to electronics, it remains patchily but fascinating, especially on Alex Empire's splatterpunk version of "Like Herod". The real motherlode, though, is a gargantuan mauling of "Mogwai Fear Satan" by Kevin Shields, where his old trick of burying tiny wailing melodies under a barrage of textured noise is taken to its logical extreme. EP+8 unites Mogwai's three EPs released between 1997-99, mapping their evolution from talented Shriek and Sonic Youth devotees to an inspired combination of guitar brood and brass band on "Burn Girl From Queens".

## NEW ORDER GET READY LONDON 007396921 CD/LP

A small miracle, this, given the uniformly shoddy nature of all New Order-related releases since 1989's Technique. Negriante Steve Osborne's other dated studio Techno rock production, and there's plenty to scrutinise here, not the least being vocalist Bernard Sumner's

rediscovered knack of stumbing upon poignancy as if by accident. Certainly, New Order have never sounded more like a conventional rock group, but continuity is ensnared by that endlessly awkward way with a tune that sets them apart from most of their contemporaries and descendants in the mainstream. And, of course, Peter Hook's cawling basslines remain both thrilling and subversive in the way they upend traditional guitar dynamics.

## SCOUT NIBLETT SWEET HEART FEVER SECRETLY CANADIAN SC86 CD

Ennio Lousie Niblett comes from Nottingham, but does everything to hide the fact on the far debut. For the most part, Sweet Heart Fever is unerringly similar to the work Chain Marshall has released as Cat Power: stark, plaintive and powerfully sung vignettes of loneliness, at times songwriting stripped down to resemble the theoretically more honest forms of folk and Country. Denative, then, but it's hard to deny Niblett has a talent for emotional engagement, and a potential for more forthright music should the mood take her. One to watch when she finds her own voice.

## PIECES OF BRAIN CRASH THE CAR DADDY MOZZ PRODUCTIONS/NO WAVE MOZZ00001/NO009 CD

Combustible improv from a British/Polish duo centred around guitarist and sax player Jim Dobie, who's played with Peter Dinklage and Charles Hayward. Crash The Car Daddy is a little too in thrall to its influences — Dobie's label goes by the name of No Wave, one track is called "Aylee's Song" — to completely take off, but there's still some deft and intuitive playing here, notably from ferocious double bassist Sławek Janina.

## DOUGAL REED RUMOURS KITTY KITTY CORPORATION CH0057024 CD/LP

A grand finale in the tradition of Pussy Galore's homage to *Collin Bon Man Street*, Rumours is, indeed, Fleetwood Mac's high gloss behemoth covered in its entirety the man behind the. Quackquack and former Tri-Faith Healers frontman Tom Cullinan, is perhaps wise to hide behind the Dougal Reed pseudonym. Nevertheless, as a concept/piece project predicated on the idea that the most beloved and familiar AOR can be reduced to unsteady lo-fi, it succeeds admirably. Cullinan disavows his source with something approaching affection, so that Rumours is much more entertaining than an ironic stab. A yelping version of "The Chain" even hits the punk motorik frequency for maximum dance pleasure.

## FRANKIE SPARO ARENA HOSTILE (VPRO RADIO RECORDINGS) CONSTITUTION CR0147 CD/LP

The Montréal Constitution collective's inevitably distressed crierer lurches up in a Dutch radio studio for this raw four tracker.

Members of A Silver Mt Zion provide the chamber strings and guitar flicks for Sparo to half mumble, half enunciate his fractured narratives in less arch style than last year's My Red Seed debut. As the wheezing machine bears that proper "Here Comes The Future" growl, not everything works. But Anna Hostile benefits from Sparo's relatively muted delivery, which might be down to the "horrible level" spoken on the sleeve.

## SPOKANE THE PROUD GRADUATES JAGJAGUWAR JACCS CD

If this is a cut above the usual alt.Country guff, it's only because Spokane frontman Rick Alverson (formerly of the equally decent Drunk) favours sloth and quasi-Ambient atmospherics that recall Souled American, rather than the earnest blandness that the genre standard. The influence of Low is prevalent, too, especially on "Proud Graduates", the stealthy opening duet with Courtney Bowles. Alverson's songs aren't quite as effective when the pace steps up fractionally — not for nothing is his publishing company called The Day In Bed Music.

## THEBOYLUCAS OUT OF THE WIRES OUTPUT 0041 CD

Curiously, this nicely understated debut from a 20 year old Brazilian works as an effective companion piece to Vincent Gallo's LP. The featured strumcups, backward loops and general air of shy bedroom dithering of Out Of The Wires may not be as convoluted as the musings of Gallo, but they're just as self-conscious. However, his instruments are far superior, embracing structure without abandoning flighty A few tracks, notably "Acoustic Charge", approach the standard set for processed folk by Faust III and Nostrop earlier this year — and "Dr In A Day When I Wake Up" begins beatifically enough to be passed off as a Boards Of Canada dirty.

## THE ZEPHYRS WHEN THE SKY COMES DOWN IT COMES DOWN ON YOUR HEAD SOUTHMEAD PMW3 CD

The presentation might conform to standard Scottish indie/post-rock and, initially, The Zephyrs' forlorn mix of slow guitars and chamber strings suggests they occupy some middle ground between The Delgados and Mogwai (with whom cellist Caroline Barber recently toured), but closer listening reveals this six piece are more indebted to the rhythmic majesty of Galaxie 500 in the way they express a predictably fatuous melancholy in delicate terms. Alarms might be raised by any album that proclaims its mentors so artlessly as to harbour a track called "Mount Mercury" — countless jabs uphill from Nick Cave And The Bad Seeds "Wail Of Mercy". Nevertheless, When The Sky Comes Down... is a gracefully arranged second album, which enriches its genre rather than diluting it.



# Critical Beats

Reviewed by Peter Shapiro

## AESOP ROCK LABOR DAYS DEF JUV PROMO CD

The fourth album of Lower East Side blues from the Big Apple fabulist is Aesop Rock's first for DJ-P's peerless Def Juvs imprint. There's no trademark dystopian/dyspatrian production from the label boss; instead, Aesop and Blackhead construct alien, singsongy, stinging heavy, "Knight Rider meets Zelig" beats that eschew DJ-P's claustrophobia in favor of a "voices in your head" paranoia. Aesop sounds like a combination of Del Tha Funky Homosapien and Dose One, mixing a slightly rigid, stentorian authority with a nasal, mouth-mouth shmeadnick neurosis. His rhymes are simple: one half Woody Allen in Bergman mode stealing lines from The Wu-Jiang Clan, and collaborating with Samuel Delany on an abstract bioplotation flick about commuters, female artists and transcending the city; one half Rammellzee trading insults with the counterterm at Kat's Deli. That said, Aesop can drop like Clyde Frazier when he has to, gliding couplets like, "Who am I? Jaberwocky Superfly." Perhaps not as immediately compelling or impressive as Cannabis O's sho-in album of the year, Labor Days is nevertheless dreamlike, funny, occasionally maniacal and very New York.

## ASHERU AND BLUE BLACK SONO COME THEADZ PROMO CD

Jazzy HipHop that succeeds because it mostly avoids the lay embrace of The Roots/Communax and has an inclusive feel making it more than a po-faced boho pose Asheru and Blue Black are better known as the Unspoken Heard, and their rhymes follow a similar "subliminal," black hippy mysticism/cosmology type vibe. Although their hearts and heads are in the right place, you're not going to listen to this for the lessons on life, but for the melodic, keyy heavy beats from J Raws, BB Keys, Sound Providers, Geology, Dmyr Brown, Khalid from Self Scientific, Richie Pitch and Yusuf Desero. That said, though, how many MCs do you know willing to compare themselves to Snuffupagus?

## THE NEXTMEN WHERE YOU'LL FIND ME SCENARIO SC001 12"

This latest UK HipHop problem plagues the latest release from Search and Beloo: great production, shame about the rap — this time, though, it's the content rather than the flow. The puns grove loops out of the speakers with verve and alacrity, but Rodney P's extended metaphor about hip-hop being his tool is unspeakably lame, even as he rides the beat more impressively than almost any other British MC around. The flip, "I Insist", with The Bronx's Red Cloud only emphasizes the problem as he hops, slips and jumps all over the punchy stabs and snappy snares.

## DJ/RUPTURE GOLD TEETH THIEF SOOT PROMO CD

This CD may be promo only, but it's so fabulous that you need to beg, borrow, renege and steal to get an ADSL link so you can go to the Website (see Directory) and download it on MP3 post haste. Señor /Rupture has previously released a couple of twelves for the Spanish Soot label and New York's Brooklyn Beats, but on this mix session has HipHop, reggae, African, dub, Middle Eastern, noise aesthetic gets writ large across a canvas broad enough to include Project Pat, Luciano Bello and Miriam Makeba. Of course, it's not just rampant eclecticism that makes this so good, but a promiscuity born of joy and pleasure, rather than boredom and restlessness. The first half is mostly a splatterbeat assault on dancehall and HipHop floor fillers, with some dubaka and avant garde composition thrown in for good measure; of particular note is the storming opening passage which runs from "Get Ur Freak On" through "Oochie Walle" and Ricky Dogg's "Risen To The Top" to DJ Soco's "Badman Time" and Barrington Levy's "Here I Come". The second half is more jostling, with Non Phoxon, Dwyan Gasparyan, The Wu, Sub Dub and John Wall all rubbing shoulders. He rounds it off with a near perfect couplet running from Project Pat's "Chicken Head" and Nottz's deconstructed "Duppy" through Illun Memaugu and Oval to

Muskgauze and South Africa's Ladyship Black Mamba.

## THE SOFT PINK TRUTH SOFT PINK MISSY SOUNDSCAPE 1602 12"

The Soft Pink Truth is Matmos's Drew Daniel cutting loose and getting freaky in leftfield House style on Matthew Herbert's label. According to the lengthy foreword puzzle that identifies the sample sources Daniel used here, there's Morton Feldman and Bob Cobbing somewhere in the mix, but mostly this is delicious, delicious, delusio dancefloor swivel. Of course, there are loads of squeaked and glitched voices skittering over the top of mixed beats, but unlike Funkstörung, say, who fuck up vocals only because they have no other ideas of how to stamp their 'radical' orientals on their mixes, Daniel uses the hiccups, stutters, gurgles and ticks for texture and play and the delight in the feel of sound, not merely to be avant garde.

## THE SOUL INVESTIGATORS CHICKEN (AIN'T NOTHING BUT A BIRD) PARTS ONE AND TWO TIMMON 300 7"

More retro funk, this time out of Finland, of all places. Nothing like the smash 'n' grab raids of The Soul Destroyers or the drunken mimicry of The Soul Fire label, The Soul Investigators are maybe the most 'authentic' of the lot, obtaining a real warden, dirty, disoriented, 15th hand Hammond organ strut, redolent of barbecue grease and smoky roadhouses in Greenville, South Carolina. Also available on the label are the faux Africanisms of Datan Nyang's "U-Bo-Te" and more instrumental shenanigans from The Soutbars, but this is the best of the bunch.

## VARIOUS ANTI NY GONIMA GDMAC12 12 CD

There are plenty of reasons to fear the 80s comeback — nah-rah skirts, Reaganomics Mk II, big hair, semi-ironic Mr Mister nostalgia, Euro-weenies in Arnie leather jackets and Vivienne shades — but the suppletive compilation of the New York new wave art underground is not one of

them. I loved about the 12" sampler that appeared about a year ago, but the full album was more than worth the wait. What more could you ask for: punk attitude, disco grooves, artifice sensibilities, uncooked technique and technological nous. The only track that feels dated (barely) is, perhaps surprisingly, Jim Jamusky's group The Del/Syncrastics "Girl's Imagination", which is new wave as you remembered it, but with some new, Deftistyle, distorted guitar riffs. Elsewhere, though, there's like Yanki (Stuart Aschright of Damskatie fame and crew) out electro-bleating everyone who ever once fingered a Kong while not blinking. Vivian Goldman making like a melloweer. Winkwinks to a killer avant reggae grove from Kerri Levene, Anwar's George (Dban) Lee and Steve Beresford; Rammellzee laying down the Company Row blueprint with the Death Comet Crew on the amazing Riklop of "Estimote St"; Sexual Harassment cross-breeding Karen Finley and Prince on "If I Gave You A Party"; the woefully understated Konik giving the bimboles some; and Jean-Michel Basquiat and Vincent Gallo's Gray studying Bernhard Günter in a film now scored by Elmer Bernstein. The five modern interpretations tacked onto the end tend to embellish when nothing extraneous is needed.

## VARIOUS VARI-POS 3 POSITION UNDERGROUND POSUNOS 12"

## VARIOUS EPCOT CENTER EP POSITION UNDERGROUND POSUNOS 12"

Excellent electro out of Helsinki rock city The 7" mini-comp features Ad Walford reaving up their outfits from the top of gurgling Acid washes; Monsieur rocking the Champs Élysées in 1984; and Dmiron X playing with the gun on their 808s. Dmiron X also features on the 12" with their emery ode to Disney's Epcot Center — sounds like there was one too many spoiled Yankee brats there on their visit. Helsinki Bass Machine's "Jum" is punny, spiky, hollow electro dub almost devoid of bass despite the group's name, but the real stars are Dipp with the paper "Rapper" and the enormous, Madonna-sampling crowdpleaser "Don't Just Stand There".



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# Dub

Reviewed by Steve Barker

## BIG YOUTH DREAD LOCKS DREAD FRONTLINE FL33 CD

Although earlier albums like *Screaming Target* and *Reggae Phenomenon* are generally held to be Jah Youth's finest outings, this set released in 1975 on Virgin's Frontline imprint is the one held most dear by many of those who came to reggae via punk. The back cover portrays the Youth in confrontational poses, with locks over the front of his face and beaming the red, green and gold rasta which Keith Hudson had kindly supplied. Tracks such as "Lightning Flash (Weak Heart Drop)" and "Lean to Rhodora" perfectly captured the rasta spirit abroad at the time, but these days some of the other instruments stand out like newly discovered, hard driven rare grooves ("Big Youth Special" and "Dread Dignity").

## ISRAEL VIBRATION DUB COMBO RAS RASSEM CD

All selections come from the vocal group's two previous albums on the label. *Jencho* and *Play The Paper*. Produced by The Radics' Rabbia Helt in Jamaica, with Dean Fraser, Nambro Robinson and Chico Chan providing the welcome horns, it's all been dubbed up by Jim Fax back in the USA. But the whole is considerably less than the parts, as the original tunes make no links and the action in the dubs is perfunctory.

## JAH WARRIOR & PETER BROGGS JAH GOLDEN THRONE DUBWISE BOX B0002 CD

## VARIOUS JAH WARRIOR SHOWCASE VOL. 2 JAH WARRIOR JWD19 CD

Peter Broggs worked at Studio One, with Prince Far I and Sly & Robbie, and the first release on the RAS label bore his name. This Jah Warrior (aka Steve Mosco) production is versed from the latter vocal album, which appeared on the label last year. That album was assumed and mislabeled, and the same attributes are reflected in this dub companion, where the two horn sound stands out for the quality of the delivery. The *Crazy Horse* strike again.

On the second volume of his own showcase series, Steve Mosco brings together contributions from an impressive line-up of vintage reggae artists, including Prince Ali, Earl Slicker, Alton Ellis and the criminally underused Winston McMillan. As usual in the tried and tested showcase format, the dub follows the tune, all with a guarantee of heavyweight steppers style.

## THE MIGHTY DIAMONDS RIGHT TIME FRONTLINE FL16 CD

## THE ROYALS PICK UP THE PIECES TAMCO WABSE57 TW1004 CD

David Walby's *Wet Chained*, the companion to the vocal set *Right Time*, was reviewed in *The Wire* 200. That dub releases often emerge first these

days underlines how it's often a case of dub for dubs sake. This is not the case here, however. Without doubt this is The Mighty Diamonds' best collection, and it's often rightly hailed as one of reggae's finest vocal group sets — of which there are many. Recorded at Channel One, the songs are delivered over a bunch of rhythms that have received versions galore. The Diamonds' vocals were never sweeter, their lyrics never better crafted. Timeless, peerless and unassessably recommended.

The Royals were another great vocal group, but unfortunately they never achieved as much success as The Mighty Diamonds. "Pick Up The Pieces" was first released as a single on Studio One, when the group were struggling through the 60s, until leader Roy Cousins eventually took control of his musical affairs. The title tune is a smokily delayed plaint in the style of Burning Spear or The Abyssinians. As the centre point of this collection of largely sufferer's material, it remains Cousins' most work.

## PRINCE LINCOLN HUMANITY ORGAN STREET UB14 CD

This album first saw the light in the UK in 1979 on United Artists' reggae imprint Bellbird, but credited to The Royal Rascals rather than his extraordinarily led vocalist Lincoln Thompson. Prince Lincoln passed away in 1998, a victim of cancer. Humanity has been unavailable for far too long as it is a classic album collecting many of Thompson's finest songs and showcasing his unique scoring voice. The opening side of the old vinyl held just three tunes, two in an extended disco style, "San Salvador" and "Old Time Friends", paved the way for the Rascals' self-styled "soterianism" reggae, serving up a smoother Philly-style approach compared to the rougher Star edge of roots popular at the time. Admittedly Prince Lincoln's vocal techniques may not be an acquired taste, but the risk takes inspirational rewards (inescapably twinned with this magnificent set) is a fairly average dub set from Roy Cousins. Liberated Dub.

## THE SKATALITES HERB DUB — COLLIE DUB MOTION FASTEN LP

In 1975 Lloyd Bennett, stand-up bass player of the original Skatalites, reunited the remaining core members of that legendary group for two sessions: the first at Lee "Scratch" Perry's Black Ark studio; the second at Herman Chin-Loy's Aquarius Studios. Two albums eventually emerged a year later in very limited numbers on the Jam Sounds label. This set comprises the King Tubby mixes of the dubs from the Black Ark cuts; the rest were mixed on the spot at Aquarius. The original inspiration for these sessions was the drumming that provided the beating heart of the marathon dancing and reasoning sessions held at Rasta camps. On this welcome release drummer Herb turns funkmeister with his phattest single volume collection of versions for dancers. The drum mixes are relentless, ferocious and pounding, especially the six minute version of "Whispering

Grass" (yes, that "Whispering Grass"), which is worth the price of entry alone. This message is on vinyl only due to the brevity of the set, which clocks in at just over 33 minutes.

## TSÉ GHOST DUB ORLSOND ORL029 CD

Duplison was set up by French Technishead Laurent Ho to explore some "non-dancefloor" directions. Although there is a clearer debt to dub here than on other contemporary Discs + Cuts excursions, the music is equally as rubbed down, gritty, distant and, on occasions, subtly brutal. The feeling of the music traces grooves, disappeared people and finished relationships in constant drift. The more lo-fi this esoteric groove becomes, the more attractive and persuasive its charms grow. Fans of Nurse With Wound and Coil can join the pilgrimage here for a journey via Chain Reaction through Rhythm And Sound and finally arriving at Studio One.

## VARIOUS BELOW THE RADAR: THE BEST OF WORDSOUND DUB ROR RUS0273 CD

## VARIOUS AMBIENT DUB MILLENNIUM MILL099 CD

"Uplift" was once a common word in reggae parlance. It meant just what you might think: joyful, uplifting, revelatory, cheerful, etc. I suppose the antonym to uplift would be downfall, which is a particularly appropriate description of this release. Nowhere can I find a better argument for the programming of individual tracks by a DJ, radio or dancehall, for most the tracks on this album stand alone as solid pieces, albeit down tempo and occasionally stunted and over-atmospheric. But collected together they add up to a depressing experience. Of course, that's recommendation enough for some people around these parts.

A different proposition is the largely European Ambient Dub which is subtitled "Futuristic Techno Dub and Electronic Roots". The Reasoner, who knows how to come out a hanging dance tune from the center of a basic sampled intro opens up with "We Come Rough", then it's straight into central Europe with Gabriel Le Mar dominating contributions with his productions on the Saatchi Boyfriends, Banned X and Dub Connected. As expected from the title, there are no slouchy rhythms and all is played for speed, but there's enough variation here to satisfy explorers of no dub especially the wacky robotic closer, "Paul Newman, My Uncle", from electro champion Newman's Unit.

## VARIOUS FIREHOUSE REVOLUTION (KING TUBBY'S PRODUCTIONS IN THE DIGITAL ERA 1985-1989) PRESSURE SOUNDS PS CDLP

By the mid 80s Prince Jammy had not only graduated from King Tubby's studio, he had also begun the monstrous "Sling Teng" rhythm, which reproduced itself digitally through the rest of the

decade. Back in Waterhouse (aka Firehouse), Tubby rebuilt his studio, encouraging some of the younger talented youths to the mixing desk and guiding them through their engineering duties. Here are 16 tunes that Tubby executed produced from a period that is often overlooked by reggae fans. Opening with three cuts of Anthony Red Rose's "Tempo" rhythm, the album then samples from the cream of the studio's works from between 1985 to 1989. "Crank Angle Part 2", a rhythm version of King Kong's "AUG", is perhaps the most startling selection, with its helicopter intro prefiguring dub 'n' bass's infatuation with the sample by almost ten years, followed by a repeated synth bassline of gargantuan proportion. There's a King Tubby mix on a version of the "Sling Teng" rhythm called "Under Me Fat Thing", and contributions from Little John, Johnny Osbourne, Tunga Stewart and Lloyd Hemmings with a good sized of brutally minimalist dub action.

## VARIOUS 500% DYNAMITE SOUL JAZZ SURF CDLP

Soul Jazz bring into play their 'no formula' formula once more, as dub meets ska meets dancehall meets. Whatever the label's proud claim is bringing all these Jamaican genres to new audiences, who thrill to the discovery. Star track is Freddie McGregor's "Natural Colours", fittingly out for Earl "Chinna" Smith's High Times label, though the critical quality of the tune is best heard in the 12" version to reach full stretch out potential. Also weighing in heavy, Dubwise, are Joe Gibbs' — or should we say Enrol Thompson's — "Dub 3" and Augustus Pablo's classic "East Of The River Nile" from the Black Ark. The new customary Raw Groove slot is occupied by (Harry) Mudd's All Stars' "Loran's Dance", but how Byron Lee keeps sneaking through the door and onto these compilations is still beyond my comprehension.

## VARIOUS JOE GIBBS ANTHOLOGY: LOVE OF THE COMMON PEOPLE 1967-1979 THOJAN TH00442 CD

Despite the presence of a bunch of overinflated compilation folders, this double set spanning from rocksteady to reggae, most rank as the best collection yet from this most prolific of producers. If you have never heard material from MC Legends Count Mechs or Sir Lord Comic, then check them here, in addition to Story The President's hilarious "Natty Pies Men GCE" and Prince Far I's elemental "Heavy Manners". Top notch vocal sides are gathered from The Heptones, Peter Tosh, Dennis Brown, Leo Graham, Lee Perry and Ken Packer. The credits on the 45 track release are a feast of comprehensive detail — probably the result of Mr Gibbs being put out of business in the 80s after a run in with the publishers of a tune versed by JC Lodge. An excellent start for those unfamiliar with the man's catalogue, but true dub fans still await the serious compilation lurking somewhere in the producer's vaults. □



# Electronica

Reviewed by Ken Hollings

## LOUIE AUSTEN

AMORE CD  
NITEY TO KNO1045 CD

There was a time, of course, when the only modern technology a guy needed to entertain people was an expensive haircut and a reasonably presentable singing voice. It's in such a spirit that *Austen* seagullman all-round entertainer Louie Austen swoops and croons his way through an emboldened lot of carefree fun, singing about sunshine and love in a throwaway Rat Pack manner. The extended electro-smut of "Gob My Shit!", however, hints at what dirtbags Sammy, Dino and Frankie probably were in private, bless their hearts. Factor in some strings, a salsa disco rhythm and some playful vishphone and it's plain that the Kid Creole reveal starts here.

## SEAN DEASON ALLEGORY & METAPHOR

INTUSOLAR NUTRUSSE CD

As part of Intus-Solar's mission to focus attention upon those who are currently shunning *Drone* Techno's outer edges, a new edition of Deason's most recent album comes as a subtle reminder of hitherto unexplored plains and strata. "Hi-phograp" swirls in on a great curve of ambient echo before picking up the pace with a heavy drum loop and some delicately programmed bass. A former graphic designer, Deason's taste for simple lines and lush textures gives a welcome brightness to each composition. From the suspended exoticism of the title out through to the sophisticated beauty of "2030 AD" and his collaboration with Claude Young on "Zag", this selection finds its surest meaning in what is only suggested.

## DUNDERHEAD BEE CAUSE SOUNDS

WORM INTERFACE W0302 CD

To describe this blend of late night swing and random electronics as 'pleasant' is not to do it with its full praise. Looking and sounding exactly like an early 60s Blue Note album stranded on the wrong side of one margarita too many, it mimes up boy how arrangements with beatnik beats and the occasional roiling surges of synthetic noise into engaging sequences of tunes and effects. Freeform montages of bass and percussion, as featured on "Black Beading", get up close and personal with deep frozen pop experiments such as "Rosh" and "Pink Beanie", involving Acid 303, digital bangs and cocktail lounge piano.

## HUIB EMMER RADION

26 tot 001

This series of subtle meditations on structure and mood is Dutch composer Huib Emmer's response to a commission from Rotterdam's Radio Wom last year, to produce a new electronic piece to be broadcast each month in Germany and the Netherlands. Muffled fragments of movie dialogue are carefully countered by distressed beats and tightly edited sequences of

repeated sounds. Tiny sets of variations on a single rhythmic cell are audaciously run backwards. Throughout, Emmer displays both the strength of mind and the technical skill to pull disparate elements into a cohesive whole.

## RICHIE HAWTIN

DEB: CLOSER TO THE EDIT  
NOVAMUTE NOLMUS CD

Cutting deeper into the mix, DEB finds the Platinium sampling and splicing more than 100 tracks. Breaking them down in the studio to their most basic components, he has amassed 300 individual loops to be restructured and inserted into strangely mutated versions of what they once were. Although reminiscent of the winning process Carl Craig employed for the closing track on his DJ-Kicks project, Hawtin's extended reinvention of the DJ's art exerts some radically new pulls and attractions. The end result is a smooth assemblage of rhythmic catenations that seduces and engages by turn.

## HELLFISH MEAT MACHINE BROADCAST SYSTEM

PLANET MUI Z0041 CD

## LESSER

MENSA DANCE SQUAD EP  
RICERBARS MECW020 CD

There's such a thin line between clever and stupid, and these guys know exactly where to draw it. Lesser goes straight for excess, not giving a good goddamn what anyone thinks about it. Each track seems ready to tear itself apart in pursuit of new ideas, making Koldo's dancehall mix of this EP's title track feel positively tranquil by comparison. Banging on your eardrums with some deeply subtle breaks and beats, Hellfish brings a malign spirit of intervention to his CD. "Radical Digga" manages to dance slivers of Public Enemy's freestyle political rhetoric back into the early days of awe's mounting repetitive beats while giving Chuck D's words a fresh metal flesh. "Guantes Di The Piss" is worth checking for the name alone, and "RIP" constantly whips for itself to new levels of delirium. Get stupid. It's the only sane alternative.

## U-ZIQ TANGO N' VECTIF

REFLEXER 013 CD

Back in your radio's and sounding fresher than ever, Mike Palatinas's 1993 debut album has been reissued in double CD format, which makes available for the first time not just all the material contained on *Tango N' Vectif's* original vinyl only release, but also his *PAS 12", "Pit"*. Airing melody lines, guitar counterpoint and a confident misreading of effects here to characterize a generously idiosyncratic exposure of sound that has whiskered the passing of time and taste with impassive grace. Quality never goes out of style.

## NOVISAD

SELEYA  
TOMLAB TOM13 CD

This charming assemblage of songs and shavings was recorded between 1998 and 2001

by Cologne's Kristian Peters. His melancholy layering of loops and decay have the wit never to stray far beyond the confines, in terms of mood or duration, of classic pop songs. "Wacht" stretches indistinct orchestrations over slumping piano. On "Einsein", the feeble sound of an acoustic guitar backed by anemic strings is fleeted out by the squeaking of a rusty wheel.

## HANS PLATZGUMER WITH CAMIL TOKUJIRI

SHONEN A  
INTERMEDIO REC 010 CD

In June 1997, police in the Japanese port of Kobe received reports that a child's severed head had been found on the grounds of a local school. The mouth had been slit open and a threatening note placed there by the killer. "Let's start the game," it said, echoing a boyish enthusiasm for computer games, comic strips and cartoons. When Shonen A, the anonymous perpetrator was eventually brought to trial, violent trash culture found itself in the dock alongside him once more. Refusing to take sides or seek blame, Tokujiri's impassioned vocal performance, offset by Platzgumer's harsh techno-pop sound sculptures, reconstructs a true story that will never have a real ending. Unflinching and compassionate.

## REUBER RUHIG BLUT

STAUBGOLD 10 CD

Time Reuber is the creator of burnished electronic surfaces with Markus Detmer as part of the Cologne based outfit Klangart. His latest solo effort comprises three carefully constructed pieces that nervously tweak the listener's expectations. Following an extended opening study of stillness and minutely shaded points of transition, the second track immediately hurls itself into a concentrated expression of compressed distortion and relentless repetition that sweats, labours and interrupts itself to a merciless overload over 20 minutes. Which makes the small moments of dreamy quiescence contained in the closing composition, "Schlaf Gur", all the more welcome.

## SCHLAMPEITZIGER COLLECTED SIMPLE SONGS OF MY TEMPORARY PAST

DOMINO W0108 CD

Further evidence that Cologne is currently wired into its own weird grid of positively charged strangeness is to be found on this 13 track retrospective set taken from the six year career of Jo Zimmermann, graduate from the city school of electronic music and art. Exuding the shapely appeal of a supermarket jingle crossed with a forlorn cowboy waltz and a karaoke ballad, Schlampetzigers instrumental work is exquisitely crafted, translucent and fun. "Margo Und Pasopja Aid Roboto" offers relaxation music for mass depressives who dream of calm blue oceans. With "Elektronischer Country" and "Harkynok Schicklenpette" share a sparse analogue sweetness. In ten years everyone will have these tunes playing on their mobile phones

## SHUDO

QUATREMASS G0110 CD

The sound collages produced by the Barcelona based artist on his computer inhabit a slightly sour and overused world, where the future is scratched, the TV's out of focus and everyone wears clothes by designer labels you've never heard of and suspect are probably made up anyway. From out of nowhere, a lone voice on "Thirios" makes laconic observations about "the bitterness and the madness of the human beings" before giving way to a smudged interplay between drums and organ. Elsewhere, during a gym celebration named after American artist Bruce Nauman, a rough-hewn block of sonic granite is slowly unveiled. You may, however, choose to spend your time some other way.

## SI FUTURES

THE MISSION STATEMENT

NOVAMUTE NOVUSSE CD

Decked out like the information pack detailing the order of events at a corporate weekend retreat in the kind of hotel that boasts broad, handless on all the doors and a trouser press in every room, Si-Futures' first album for Novamute has a playfully skewed take on Techno's more ambitious moments. "Eurostar" is the Kraftwerk track that Ralf and Florian couldn't be arsed with recording themselves, and the bland customer information recordings featured at the beginning and the end of this epic will give you some idea why "Toric Funk", "Assault On Precinct 14" and "Firestyle Disco" are also firmly on message.

## SIEG ÜBER DIE SONNE

(-) X (-) = (+)  
MULTICOLOUR MCR116 2 CD

Shimmering elegantly and gently lacerating, like a coil of designer razor wire in the most fetching pastel shades, the latest release from Pink Ein and Dandy Jack lists the listener into its secrets gradually. "Bear Boat" starts out phat and belligerent, and then grows into a funky amalgam of alternating tropes. "Our Klang Und Sein Schatten" unfolds serenely out of repeated ascending lines; "Hot" is all disco flash and front held together by a swooping melancholic theme, while "You'll Never Come Back" goes off westwardly into space. Things get a little more forlorn towards the end, but the spine tingles at the same time.

## THEY CAME FROM THE STARS (I SAW THEM)

THEY CAME FROM THE STARS  
(I SAW THEM)

LO RECORDINGS L010613 10"

Stranded in time and space somewhere between Canterbury in the late 1960s and planet Mars five seconds after the UK's Beagle 1 probe touches down, this intergalactic call sign has a slashdash incoherence that's impossible to resist; the title track on this debut 10" makes way for the sprawling space of synthesizer noodling, treated electric violin, prog drumming and rebellion that is "Beer Of The Gods". Query? "Yes, I'm here". Certainly. Do they mean? Let's hope so. |







# Jazz & Improv

Reviewed by Julian Cowley

## GUSTAVO AGUILAR LOOKING FOR AZTLAN ACOUSTIC LEVITATION AL 1008 CD

Aguilar has played with trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith, whom he's heard alone on a decidedly superior solo percussion record. The Latin outlook is prominent and Aguilar uses voice and rhythmic acoustic guitar at times to that effect, but the album is also testimony to his deep immersion in percussive strains mapped out by the likes of John Cage, Steve Reich and The Art Ensemble Of Chicago. He plays and interprets composed music, including pieces by John Bergamo, a percussionist whose playing credentials span from Charles Gayle to George Crumb and who was also a member of the group with Smith. One piece, written by Jonathan Grosse, incorporates some fine gonging. Overall there's never a dull moment.

## RASHID BAKR QUINTET RATH NADIE MAJIC 1001 CD

Drummer Rashid Bakr played with Cecil Taylor and, with bassist William Parker, acts as the motor for the estimable Other Dimensions In Music quartet. His own group pursues an adjacent but distinct course. The differences start with instrumentation, this quintet features a tenor sax but also a plugged-in duo of guitar, bass and keyboard. Proximity to Other Dimensions bears down to Bakr's taste for polyrhythmic continuities that simmer and churn without spilling over into blustering excess. It's underground music with Prime Time suavity at its root, busily gliding with activity yet uncensored. Some especially feisty tenorists issue from Mark Herne's keyboard, but the group's voice remains collective and tight knit.

## JOHN BUTCHER & DYLAN VAN DER SCHYFF POINTS, SNAGS AND WINDINGS MENECEUS MUSIC/SOLO CD

A sax and percussion tussle with Butcher characteristically aggressive on tenor and soprano. There's nothing sweet or mellow in his playing, it's knotty, tough and highly vocal. Solos are built from animated chatter, protracted growls and flutters, snail whirring and fractured tones. A seasoned solo performer and natural talkative, Butcher in collaboration thrives on good listeners. The drummer from Vancouver responds with appropriate directness and flexibility. Van Der Schyff is clearly interested in what the saxophonist has to say, and matches attentively his changes of pace, mood and intensity.

## CERF/FOLMER/ESMERODE ORNITHOLOGIES AOTU SUONI A0909 CD

Yes, Cerf, from Geneva, has previously been heard grappling with bass saxophone on an Alton Soren release by the group Low Brass. On *Ornithologies* he shifts mostly to higher register versions of the instrument to front a trio with bassist Frédéric Traine and percussionist Rolf Esmerode. As the title indicates, there are birds

involved, providing an inspirational springboard for the group's buoyant jazz. Cerf has made music for theatre and circuses, and there's a mischievous quality to his improvising, mimicry and magic-like sleight on snippets drawn from unexpected sources, such as nursery rhymes and South American folk melodies. Actual birdsong fed into the music is gleefully and destructively. Best leave the bird stuff to Paul Panuysen's Grand Canary Band.

## ALEX CLINE ENSEMBLE THE CONSTANT FLAME CRYPTOGRAPHICPHONE CG110 CD

There's an elegiac tone to Californian drummer Cline's new album, with pieces dedicated to the memory of trumpeter Don Cherry, clarinetist John Carter, composer Toru Takemitsu, film director Krzysztof Kestowski and Japan's poetess of passion Akiko Yosano. There's also a piece for David Sylvian, whose music inhabits an adjacent plot. Cline has an aptitude for concerning beauty, and his ensemble succeeds in putting delicate flesh on his concepts. Jeff Gauthier's wain playing and Anna Kernani's lovely voice are especially valuable. Start from The Golden Palominos at their most tender and steer into more tranquil waters. There you'll find Cline remembering what has moved him.

## JEROME COOPER IN CONCERT: FROM THERE TO HERE MUTABLE MUSIC 17508 CD

During the 1970s Cooper drummed alongside Larry Jenkins and Sione in The Revolutionary Ensemble. Now, as then, his commitment is to raise the cultural status of jazz drumming. Recorded live at the Roosters and Kintong Factory, during three gigs between 1995-98, this is an attractively melodic and intensely polyrhythmic solo percussion album. Cooper has absorbed lessons from drummers worldwide. He uses balafones and talking drums and integrates secondary instruments, including an electronic keyboard and the chroma, a double reed wind instrument. It says a lot that he can import aspects of gamelan without banality and make "My Funny Valentine" sound almost entirely unfamiliar.

## MARK DRESSER & DENMAN MARONEY DUOLOGUES VIC107 CD

The prepared piano repertoire has evolved its own set of formulas and clichés. Denman Maroney sidesteps those and discovers new magic in the instrument's dusty interior. His "typewriter" pieces (as he terms his subtle bowing, plucking and tapping) reconceive the instrument's potential in extraordinary ways, subordinating the keyboard's conventional use to the huge range of sounds latent within the strings. The result is concentrated music, never mere effects. With that great double bassist Mark Dresser, Maroney summons up timbres usually confined to electroacoustic compositions with an extra freshness and life.

## 4 WALLS 'AND THE WORLD AIN'T SQUARE' RED NOTE 5 CD

It starts with an anarchist anthem by John Henry Mackay and includes writings of poems by ee cummings, Audre Mitchell and Ho Chi Minh. Singer Phil Minton sounds dramatic and impassioned, writing recklessly to the sound poetry interface, belching, whining, mumbling and jabbering while pianist Verlyn Weston, bassist Luc Ex and drummer Michael Votcher roll and tumble around him. Angle is an energy, here channelled poetically and constructively into music that's stirring and challenging in the same breath.

## MEL GROVES DAY OF LOVE MUTABLE MUSIC 17505 CD

Benest Groves has an impressive jazz pedigree. He has worked with saxophonists Lee Konitz, Joe Henderson and Dewey Redman, and is director of jazz studies at Sonoma State University in California. His enthusiasms extend to Indian, African and contemporary classical music, and that's reflected in these two compositions. "Global Village" (1988), commissioned by The Kronos Quartet, is here performed by the group Ethel. "Day Of Love" sets poems by Chilean bard Pablo Neruda for Thomas Buckner's baritone voice, Bob Aft's flute and Groves's bass. The writing and performances are appropriately sober; refined melodies are enlivened by openness to a broad range of expressive techniques.

## GÜNTER HEINZ MEETS EUROPEAN POWERBOOK ENSEMBLE TROMBONE ON MARS FOR 4 EARS 1139 CD

Trombonist Heinz's early explorations of multiphonics have led him subsequently to investigate electronics in a variety of contexts. At the 1998 season in Basel he also played *Fute*, and the sounds he generated were processed instantly through the low electronic channels of Jochen Bohner and Wolfgang Henniger. The result is not simply treated blowing but genuine trio music with the sound instruments blended sparsely into a spacious, carefully paced and balanced stream of sound.

## JOHN LAW QUARTET ABACUS HATOLOGY 587 CD LAW/WELLS/CLARVIS STRANGE STORIES CORNUCOPIA CRO10 CD

John Law is quickly established himself as a significant pianist, ploughing several fertile furrows simultaneously. These two manifestations confirm his skill, musical intelligence and sound judgment. The company he keeps is a measure of the latter. His quartet features Gerry Hemingway on drums, Jon Lloyd on alto and soprano saxophones and Tim Wells on bass. *Abacus*, recorded in London in May 2000, follows the model of a baroque suite, but with Hemingway's galvanising presence its jazz credentials are

beyond question, and the Bach triple edge Law towards a Keith Jarrett affinity. *Strange Stories* was recorded in August 1997 with Wells and Paul Davis on drums, the trio that made *Swiss Leads* (Autumn Steps) two years earlier. Law's title sensibly addresses the conventions of the jazz piano trio and walks a narrow line between the well-worn and the fresh with satisfying results.

## ROSCOE MITCHELL & THOMAS BUCKNER 8 O'CLOCK: TWO IMPROVISATIONS MUTABLE MUSIC 17509 CD

The full spectrum voice of baritone Buckner has been integral to the successful realisation of Robert Ashley's operatic oeuvre; it has also been heard for more than two decades in quaring improvisations alongside multi-instrumentalist Mitchell. Recorded one evening last December, this CD documents a further stage in the duo's ongoing research. The format Art Ensemble Of Chicago musicians plays flute and percussion as well as alto and soprano saxophones; Buckner couples evident formal training with freedom to roam. Individual sounds and occasional phrases are placed scrupulously within the field of science. Relationships among the sounds become apparent with time, patterns emerge and dissolve.

## EVAN PARKER & PATRICK SCHEYDER EVAN PARKER & PATRICK SCHEYDER LED UR108 CD

Last November Parker entered the studio with an improbable collaborator: composer and Chopin interpreter Scheyder. The pianist has shown an intense interest in improvisation over a number of years, and working with Parker was clearly an ideal occasion to test his intuitive skills. It's immediately striking how his past experiences shape his instantaneous responses; his touch and attack are quite distinct from those of most jazz and free players. Parker has worked with Equally interesting is Parker's reaction in closing the gap between their respective histories. His signpost is as bold as wax, but you sense he's holding energy in reserve, alert to the fullness of Scheyder's blowing approach to the piano, wary of overloading the music.

## AKI TAKASE LE CAHIER DU BAL LED UR119 CD

Inspired by dancer Anri Funakawa, pianist Takase unfolds a suite of dance pieces, executed with pinpoint precision. Music is clearly the cornerstone of her jazz thinking, but Takase radiates out in multiple directions, stepping from her bursts to the heart of Western classical tradition with a singular combination of delicacy and strength. Her method was to imagine her fingers to be Funakawa dancing across the keyboard or, on the "Inside Tears" trilogy, upon the piano's prepared interior. Tangle or tarantella, each improvisation teeters with an energised precariousness that invariably resolves into graceful balance. □



# Modern Classical

Reviewed by Andy Hamilton

## CORNELIUS CARDEW FOUR PRINCIPLES ON IRELAND AND OTHER PIECES AMPSOUND IMPRINT CD

Revolutionary musical rhetoric from the late British experimentalist, Cardew dispels the boundary between art and propaganda, and in the final phase of his career, after following Stockhausen and then Cage, Cardew sided with Eider against Adorno. These piano pieces, played by the composer and recorded in 1974 in Milan, are mostly inspired by folk songs, most successfully the Irish pieces which open the disc. On *Behave* and *Regulation Is The Man*, Trend, Marston-Lewis meets pub piano and rock 'n' roll respectively, while the Chinese pieces sound almost as silly on piano. Though Mao's genocidal activities weren't widely recognised at the time, poems to Chinese communist such as *Long Live Chairman Mao* and *Soon There Will Be A High Tide Of Revolution...*, based on an article by the Great Helmsman, are simply risible.

## DAVID DEL TREDICI SECRET MUSIC: A SONGBOOK CRI 818 CD

Del Tredici is the American composer who, along with George Rochberg, rejected the serialist hegemony and rediscovered tenacity in the 60s. He then obsessively composed pieces based on *Adieu in Wonderland*. But his "secret music" is a book of art songs with sexually frank lyrics, reflecting the secret of his life: he came out in the 80s. Composed during the last decade in a flow of inspiration according to Tredici, haste is the overriding impression. Vocalists are Harry Pittman, Chris Pedro Takas and Kelly Kelly, with the composer on piano, but the poems by Colette Lutz and others aren't resolved clear by the style of classical singing. Not likely to be one of Norman Tordella's desert island discs.

## MICHAEL FINN FINK I HEAR IT IN THE RAIN COLD BLUE CDS004 CD

## MARTY WALKER DANCING ON WATER COLD BLUE CDS005 CD

Two releases that pursue the very satisfying ethos of the reemerged Cold Blue label. The label claims that Michael Finn's soundworld has affinities with Morton Feldman, but that's only a fleeting impression; he certainly doesn't share Feldman's obsession with imperceptible attack and decay. Short pieces for piano and for celeste are simple, slow and gentle, the 20 minute *Living To Be Hunted By The Moon*, with Marty Walker on clarinet and the composer on soprano, trades the uneasy boundary between Ambient and New Age. Fink's *As Is Thought/Aurora* appears on the more substantive rental by clarinetist Marty Walker. Here Michael Byers' Elegant Debours stands out, achieving an unusually pure, bucolic ambience on solo bass clarinet before rising to keening intensity. Jan Fock's *Amor Simple* Shadowlands features Walker with free jazz trumpet Wadada Leo Smith in restrained mood, while

Rick Cox's *On Tuesday* produces much darker, lugubrious textures for bass and contra-alto clarinets.

## DANIEL HEIKALO ENDROITS INQUIETANTS HEIKALO SOUND PRODUCTIONS HSP001 CD

It's interesting how the French-German musical divide was transformed and even persists now in electronic music. Appearing on the French-Canadian composer's own label, Endroits Inquiets (Worms Space) is superior electroacoustic music or musique concrète. Most sounds come from Heikalo's own recordings – no samplers or synthesizers – but the sax and trumpet recordings on *Clame* and *Endroits* were "made by Hugh Blackmer in a 60 foot long PVC drain pipe in 1987". That track is a homage to the composer's father, who worked most of his life in a town yard. Twinkle Twinkle Variations is assembled from prerecorded sources including piano frame, percussion and the wonderfully named "bureaucratic (dresser without the drawers)". The highlight is the *Narcissus Tribute* (Le Fantôme d'un Piano which uses a despatch piano frame. Unlike Pierre Schaeffer, Heikalo doesn't try to abstract sounds from their environmental origins, and the results are raw but often captivating.

## WALTER MARCHETTI DE MUSICORUM INFELICITATE ALMA MARCHETTI PLANA MMSH003 CD

In The Year 1885, Flaubert associate Marchetti explained how he looked at "the atrophy of Western music". To his taste this claim, he wrote *Le Secre De Delmo* for piano accompanied by grunting pigs. *De Muscorum Infelicitate* (The Unhappiness Of Music) continues his series of piano projects, and consists of ten variations, sounding almost the same, for a tangled mass of subterranean sounding, presumably multitracked piano lines. Each is brutally cut at exactly six minutes' length, emphasising the framing of the performances like a frame round a painting. The sleeve features Marchetti's paradoxical musings: "If only music were able to recognise its own superiority it could fulfil its destiny." Crazy infusing.

## LUIGI NONO AL GRAN SOLE CARICO D'AMORE TELECOM ITALIA 067831059 3XCD

Nono's Marxist denunciations of the culture industry weren't exactly career enhancing, he's much less well known than fellow 50s avant guardists Stockhausen and Boulez. Nono described *Al Gran Sole* as an "avante sonata" or stage action, its libretto a montage of evolutionary songs, historical documents and poetic fragments. Part 1 focuses on the Paris Commune of 1871. Part II on the Russian Revolution of 1905, and post-WWII uprisings in Italy and the Third World. Nono's writing for voices is wholly individual and creates striking effects, as when a single line is shared by four singers and even the whole chorus. The score is complex and multifaceted, but the most amazing

passages, vocal and orchestral, catch the ear – not least the ethereal floating tape parts, mentioned only as "noise" (tape) in the libretto. The recording, taken from a live performance in 1999 with the Staatsorchester Stuttgart under Lothar Zagrosek, is an incredibly ambitious realisation.

## IAN PACE TRACTS NMC D055 CD

Pace's solo piano recital includes music by some of the toughest and/or enigmatic of contemporary British composers, including Brian Ferneyhough, Richard Barrett and Christopher Fox. Barrett's 30 minute *Tracts*, described by Pace as "one of the most demanding piano works ever composed", has fenshish melodic irregularities and a rucous richness of ornamentation. Tracts conveys at least a residue of post-Romantic pantheistic expressiveness, though the recording appears to be deliberately hard edged by classical standards. Fox challenges us with a different emotional incoherence, with minimalism an obvious mechanistic influence on *AK Relik*. Pronounced "lick relic", this piece treats traditional expression, the conceptual underpinnings of American minimalism seem banal in comparison. *AK* is inspired by Jerry Lee Lewis's keyboard playing, while *RELIK* brilliantly mimics the stutters of House, Acid and techno sampling – piano only, no electronics. The other compositions, notably Brian Ferneyhough's *Lerna-Icon-Epigram*, find becoming a contemporary classic, command equally awesome performances.

## R MURRAY SCHAFER STRING QUARTETS 1-7 ATMA ACAD 2218/269 2XCD

The Mahan Quartet may well be right that this is one of the major quartet cycles of the 20th century, certainly of the second half, comparing with those of Kurtag and Tippett. The quartets date from 1970-99, and break up traditional forms with fluidity of parts, spatial movement of players and integration of multiple sound sources. The Canadian composer's book *Turning The World* shows his concern with sounds of the natural environment, beautifully illustrated by Quartet No. 2. Waves, which evokes the unceasing, periodic motion of the oceans. Quartet No. 4 magically integrates a soprano voice into its closing minutes, while in No. 3 the players are called upon to yell out karate cries and other vocal effects. No. 7 features an obligato soprano and percussion. There are rich treasures in these quartets, which gradually emerge over repeated listenings to some superb interpretations.

## ELLIOTT SCHWARTZ/ GEORGE ROCHBERG QUARTETS MTICR MSH29561 CD

George Rochberg's Third Quartet from 1972 is a masterpiece that rejects serial modernism, going beyond quotation in a revival of the styles of

Mahler and Beethoven. Like Del Tredici, but a much more substantial figure, Rochberg begins as a serialist but rebelled against the avant garde stranglehold, believing that "modern" doesn't have to imply "modernist". The Quartet is so postmodernist pastiche either: "I was trying to find ways to anchor atonal adventures in tonal thinking... don't know what I call it, and certainly don't want to diminish or demean it by calling it 'postmodern'", the composer wrote recently. Elliott Schwartz's *Belagio* (transfers from 1981) is his only string quartet, and a tougher nut. More memorable than other works I've heard by this composer, it gets powerful advocacy from The Kreutzer Quartet.

## MARK ANTHONY TURNAME MUSIC TO HEAR BLACK BOX BBM1005 CD

The enantiomorph of Three Screaming Pops has melted into a productive middle age. Maybe Turname's success has depended a lot on his violent expressiveness, and certainly he views his chamber music as more intimate and melancholy. These short pieces, performed by The Nash Ensemble, are almost all nocturnal or elegiac, but the effect can be so horrific. *Corrige For Chris* – in memoriam for Christopher Van Kampen, cellist with The Nash Ensemble – is the best known piece, Three Farewells – most substantive.

## STEFAN WOLPE BERLIN 1929-31 SILE RSC 0514 CD

"Instead of 12 tone symphonies, I have learnt to write little songs for the masses in F major, working in bars, going to villages with theatre groups..." Wolpe's response to the rise of fascism was eventually forced to leave Berlin in 1933) includes these brilliant agit-prop pieces for solo singer or choir with piano accompaniment, and they make a challenging contrast with Cardew's disc. Wolpe is still undervalued, his achievement astonishingly wide-ranging, these pieces run from tonal chorale pieces to Pierrot Lullaby-like sprechstimme in the composer's individual kind of serialism. Last performances directed by soprano Marinette Pousseur fully exploit the composer's dramatic, incantatory mode of address.

## EVAN ZIPORYN THIS IS NOT A CLARINET CAPTALCITY CAS1002 CD

And it's not a painting by Magritte either. Evan Ziporyn's solo clarinet disc is about "the clarinet as electric guitar, djembe, didgeridoo". Despite testing the instrument's intimate capacities, and vociferous through the instrument, Ziporyn has a gorgeous, fat, perhaps obese sound on his instrument, and an even tone through its registers. Though he plays with Bang On A Can, and his disc concludes with David Lang's predictably tedious *Press Release*, most pieces are in a more sensitive category. Ziporyn's own *Four Impressions*, based on transcriptions of traditional music from Japan, Kenya and Indonesia, are beautifully affecting. (.)



# Outer Limits

Reviewed by Jim Haynes

## AIRWAY BEYOND THE PINK LINE ORGAN OF CORTI 27 3XCD

Airway was formed by longstanding Los Angeles Free Music Society member Joe Potts as a means "to subliminally program audiences behind the cover of a chaotic wall of sound". Presented as a reunion show for Airway with LAFMS members and out on Valentine's Day 1998, *Beyond the Pink Line* is a thick noise attack propelled by a simple 4/4 beat. Strangely enough, this has much more in common with what was happening on the other coast in the late '70s (the No Wave factions of Mars and Glenn Branca's Theoretical Girls) than the carnivalesque, sound-cloning free jazz leanings of other LAFMS recordings. It may be difficult to discern the success of the subliminal programming, as the signals were obscured through a dizzy chain of amplifiers that disguised the original message into a gritty blur of malevolent noise. John Duncan, who performed in Airway that night along side Mike Kelley, Don Bolles, Dennis Duck and Fredrik Nilsson, has confirmed that the subliminals may not have been too effective at the show since the audience plugged their ears in response to the sheer volume. But there are 7000 copies of this circulating, which may be building the next army of serial killers. Use with caution.

## MASAMI AKITA & ZBIGNIEW KARKOWSKI MAZK TIGERBEAR MEOWH14 CD

Any new Merbow album now sounds like a meeting with an old friend. A few new anecdotes, maybe a new pair of glasses and a couple of innovations in noise manifestation, but it's Merbow all right. Merbow's Akita maintains a distinctive signature which stands out not so much in the noise itself, but in the way his curatorial skills manipulate purposeful disorder into a time based intimacy. Even when working with the prolific Zbigniew Karkowski, he encodes his work with that signature to ensure that his ardent followers can detect elements of familiarity. On their second MAZK collaboration, Akita and Karkowski propel the album with a chugging twin bass kick, bearded up by a proper amount of blurred distortion. This rhythmic locomotive lumbers through dense sonic fields of post-apocalyptic rubble, cascades of acids splashes resulting from piercing granular synthesis, and internal diatonic squeals.

## ELECTRIC COMPANY "62-56" TIGERBEAR MEOWH15 CD

You might remember Los Angeles's Medicine from the early '90s, post-Mr. Bungle's Valentine fallout. Their incendiary take on the MTV sound crumbled under an excess of white hot guitar distortion masterminded by Brad Laner. That same surcharged heat which Laner channelled for Medicine has been gradually resurfacing nearly a decade later in Laner's recent electronic project Electric Company. Where Medicine's dreampop sizzled noisily

under a scorching desert sun, Electric Company contextualises digital distortion as a smiley, happy sunshine ambient that holds a bit more diversity in its inspiration. On "62-56", released on Kid606's Tigerbeard imprint, fragments from u-Zq's electronic whirring, Raster-Noton's tasteful arrangements for the glitch and almost direct quotations from Mouse On Mars's *Wolfgang Voigt* into a pleasant, but slightly distasteful pastiche.

## FILAMENT 29092000: THE OSCILLATING 'WILL' AND THE FLICKERING 'SELF' AMOBHC AMOSKAT0 CD

Only in Japan could a performance as minimal as the one given by Filament, the duo of experimental turntablist Otsome Yoshihide and electron purist Sachiko M, be recorded with an open air microphone and capture all of the sounds unimpeded by a bunch of drunken yekels at the bar. Over the course of 30 minutes, very little happens to the piercing laserbeam shot of Filament's sinewave singlemindedness. Yet just outside the range of human perception, Filament set off tiny sonic raptures which inevitably alter the course of the sinewave with a slight flicker, a ghostly echo from a sympathetic frequency or a minute ping. There someone in the audience coughs and you wonder how many people were in that room, sitting perfectly still.

## REV DWIGHT FRIZZELL BULLFROG DEVILDOG PRESIDENT SPARKLING BEXKMR SGR0219 CD

For the past three decades, Kansas City's Rev Dwight Frizzell has been making sacrosanct films, composing crackpot symphonic catastrophes and organising baffling performances with a small army of bleated freethinkers. Bullfrog DevilDog President is his latest offering of half-serious charm, loosely based upon an album that Frizzell found of US President Harry S Truman playing choppy piano waltzes. With no strong narrative structure to be found, Frizzell haphazardly picks through the gigantic cultural grab bag that is America, pulling off political manifestos, religious proclamations, the history of free jazz and even the geography of Missouri itself. If it's possible to imagine an Ozark hillbilly performing an impenetrable homage to Nurse With Wound or Sun Ra, but only using what an Ozark hillbilly might have lying around (a banjo, a hammer, some celloids, a set of bongos and that dusty Harry S Truman album), you'll come close to the wonderful absurdity that is Rev Dwight Frizzell.

## D HAINES EMO SIGMA EDITIONS SIGMA020 CD

O Haines's Emo houses an ecstatic monumentality in its three expansive tracks of swarming, Gaussian blue drones. Attesting to the music's sheer size, Haines has tried each

of the tracks after various geological formations: "Koscosqueto" (Australia's closest relative to an alpine region), "Peak Communism" (a massive vertical slab found in the former Soviet republic of Tajikistan) and "Gibraltar" (using dense packed layers of redolinescent timbres, Haines simultaneously portrays both the psychological gravity of bearing witness to these rocky outcroppings, and the physical influences over atmospheric conditions. He has composed these dense layers of sound through various lengths of tonally similar, cyclical repetitions that at times are more digital wops resembling Wolfgang Voigt's Gae recordings. At others, these repetitions push towards infinity. Far from being a pure digital production, Haines does let his analogue source material speak, albeit in disguised voice uttering a dreamy sound.

## STEPHAN MATHIEU FREQUENCYLIB RITOFRELL RIT013 CD

As a drummer for Stoil and Butch Morris's ensemble Berlin Skyrocker, Stephan Mathieu has described himself as a "free jazz socialised Ringu enlightened by disco". Judging from the use of efficient rhythmic loops infused with timesretched scratch and pointillist glitches found on *frequencyLib*, the same pity remark could be applied to these tricked out deconstructions of historical pop tunes ranging as far back as 1928th. Mathieu's fragmentation of mediated sounds into hypnotic passages obviously recalls Oval's *Systémisme* and 34 Oskoin, in which Markus Popp purposefully scarred the surfaces of CDs and collaged their whirling playback into sublime melodic compositions. Where Oval's alchemy disguised the original into something completely unrecognisable, Mathieu challenges his audience to decipher the origins of his work by allowing for some of the tracks to retain obvious quotations, as in his appropriation of The Smashing Pumpkins on "Some Of It". Yet he makes the decoding process no more difficult on "Sad Fast Car", a digital threnody filled with tiny accelerated whirings that is anybody's guess as to where it came from.

## MONOS 360° ANOMALOUS NOME CD

Please don't stop at the artwork, which features a goofy watercolour of a painfully cute pulpy cat, complete with big Neane eyes gone all crooked, or else you'll miss a fantastic presentation of processed field recordings from Garen Telle (formerly of Ota) and Colin Potter (a member of the extended Nurse With Wound/Cranial 93 family). 360° applies with darkened ebb and flow patterns, partially abstracted from the rush of traffic or even human breath. Slowly seated drones based upon the tonalities of Japanese flutes filter through the methodically slow rhythms and announce the presence of a flock of songbirds, echoes from a subterranean pool and the whispering fluctuations of wind.

## STILLUPPSTEYPA & TV POW WE ARE EVERYONE IN THE ROOM ENSTWELL ENST014 CD

We Are Everyone In The Room is a collection of material recorded during the US tour in the fall of 2000 by the Powerbook trio Stilluppsteypa (Icelandic, but currently resident in The Netherlands and Germany) and TV Pow (of Chicago). Though they had never performed together before, the act surprises with the restrained panache, mutual respect and aesthetic splendour the two groups managed to pull off. As both ensembles specialise in the recombination of sonic minutiae, neither was particularly interested in upstaging the other with macho displays of ego inflation, although Stilluppsteypa's subtle, absurdist humour makes itself known from time to time. This album contains a broad spectrum of manipulated glitches — from globally distant drones and surface noise static to eerie, digitally microscopic shimmers and tense, Morse code assemblages — but is focused within an intelligent blueprint of studied tonal fluctuations and spartan, post-Techno rhythms.

## KEITH FULLERTON WHITMAN 21:30 FOR ACUSTIC GUITAR AMPTROB AMPT002 CD

Better known to the world as Hnrdst, Keith Fullerton Whitman offers a beautiful diversion to his "Armen" based drill 'n' bass productions with the tense 21:30 For Acoustic Guitar. Inspired by Terry Riley's *Timeless Accumulator*, which looped sound back upon itself to conjure hypnotic dislocations, Whitman ran an acoustic guitar through his laptop and a four-head tape delay machine. With the computer filtering out all frequencies except the root tones from the guitar and the constant modulation of very slowly decaying echo patterns from the delay effects, Whitman has updated the Fingerprints of No Pussyfooting for an audience schooled in Aphex Twin's Selected Ambient Works Vol 2. The repetitive riffs generated through the computer resonate with the insistent zion of the guitar, but manifest tonalities that wistfully float in clusters of shimmering particles blown outward in a slow motion aerosol dispersion.

## WOBBLY REGARDS AKU BEGINNING 19 3" CD-R

After several years of quietly offering assistance to help audio pranksters People Like Us and Blechnum from Blechnum, Jon Wobly/Leseder presents a solo recording of his own decreed electronics in the form of the *Regards 3* CD-R. His apparent attention deficit disorder is well suited to his predilection for jumbled plunderphoria, as Wobly/galvanises digitally combed samples (Residents, Guy Nizewski, Andrew Saters and John Coltrane) into a complex array of seakick yet strangely clanky loops, before quickly discarding them in search of another set of quirky rhythms. His resultant warped pop sensibility could easily be confused for Matmos. □



# Ether Talk



The big dish: two views of the former Soviet army radio telescope in Latvia, captured in August by remote videography

**At the Acoustic Space Lab symposium in Latvia, a crack squad of international media artists and scientists took over a former Soviet spy station to tune into the harmony of the spheres. Words: Mukul**

Seven years after the withdrawal of the Soviet, a 32 metre diameter radio telescope in the hazy forest near Ventspils, an oil tank port in western Latvia, was occupied once more. This time the invaders were media artists and activists, among them Caudible, RadioQuail, Sam Kolster, Robert Adrian X, Redo 90, Silvana Meda, Dogtodies, Inonatal, Makrolab, Clausthorne, ngosound.org, and my own outfit, ambientV.net. They were gathered for the Acoustic Space Lab symposium, set up to explore the interface of art and communications technologies, and to launch an International Acoustic Space Research Programme. The event took place over nine days in August between the Ventspils International Radio Astronomy Centre (VIRAC) and Riga.

When the Soviet Army withdrew from the Baltic States in 1993, they revealed the existence of an espionage centre near Ventspils used to eavesdrop on Western satellite communications. Of the three antennae at the site, the Soviets took the smallest dish, but the RT-16 and RT-32 — 16 and 32 metre dishes, respectively — were too big to move. Under pressure from the international radioastronomy community, the army held off from blowing them up and instead gave them to the Latvian government. However, a handover team did "prepare" the dishes, throwing metal debris into the mechanics, driving nails

through cables and pouring acid into the electronics. But despite only nominal support from the Latvian government, enthusiasts from various Latvian scientific institutions repaired the damage and transformed the dishes into remarkably precise operational radio telescopes. RT-32 has been used to detect radiation from the planets, the moon (some due to lunarquakes), the sun and other stars, and extragalactic sources including possible black holes. It has also been used for "Very Long Baseline Interferometry" (VLBI), in which widely separated telescopes are coupled to produce a giant antenna of a size equivalent to the distance between them. But lack of funds to repair leaks in the labs and upgrade the toilet in the Soviet-era wooden hut means that RT-32 is not overruled by astronomers — leaving it open for takeover by a bunch of media vagabonds like us. In true festive spirit, a green portable was brought in.

Acoustic Space Lab set up three working groups at RT-32 under the guidance of Dmitriy "Dino" Bernikov. He was trusting enough to allow us unlimited access, and assisted with all types of reception but, since no one had produced the requisite license, he ruled out transmissions. RT-32 is mounted on a 25 metre concrete tower. Three groups established residency in various parts of the superstructure. Makrolab

mounted their own Lownd 1.5 GHz feed line to the dish's original spying purpose, they eavesdropped on communications satellites. Analogue channels on an Inmarsat yielded family chatter in Tamil and a minor drama about a slowway, which regally took on bureaucratic overtones. In the spirit of their earlier Webstreaming/feedback experiments, ambientV.net hoped to place a call and route it via one of these channels, intercept it and then feed it back, but logically this proved impossible.

Fuelled by borscht and Black Balsams (the other black gold of the Baltics), the acoustic group scaled the dish and rigged it with microphones. Dino lowered the dish to zero elevation and scanned the horizon. Above the wind noise, the mics picked up rustlings from the dense forest, occasional bird cries, conversations on the ground and a screeching handbrake turn. Movement at the dish also generated spectacular sinusoidal groans and squeals, concordant in thirds and accompanied by excited squeals from the submitters.

The radioastronomy group attempted to observe Venus, Jupiter and the sun. With only a few hours' observation, it proved difficult to isolate any planetary signals amid the noise, but data from the solar scans is being incorporated

into Java applets and transmitted from MIT by Mr. Snow (Caudible). Attempts to step down the GHz frequencies into the audible range yielded, predictably, white noise. But this was food enough for Clausthorne, who spent hours manipulating the noisier audio into warm, full industrial soundscapes. Meanwhile, back in Riga, the material gathered and processed during the four days at the telescope was Webcast in a six hour programme from the UMS Galeria with remote participation from Kunststradio (archived at zone re-lab-net/live nm).

So, what did this meeting of "science and art" produce? Even with a massive dish in hand, we still didn't cook up anything approaching what Alvin Lucier achieved with a couple of tape recorders. There was no space for significant dialogue between scientists and artists. But we hope to use Acoustic Space Lab as a launchpad for deeper collaborations. At the close of the symposium, VIRAC director Edgaris Bervids concluded that, though the antenna ought to be used primarily for science, "artists can use it to fill the vast spaces in our universe that science cannot reach." Recordings from Acoustic Space Lab will feature in the forthcoming Acoustic Space reader (acoustic.space@re-lab.net). Event site: [www.graves.org/spaceslab/](http://www.graves.org/spaceslab/)

## Go To:



"We are looking forward to listen to your stuff", announce the enthusiastic folks at [insane](http://insane.org) ([www.insane.net](http://www.insane.net)). Starting off as an MP3-only label/Net community run from London and Japan, they have recently begun releasing CDs and started a series of live events popping up at different locations around the world. Subtitled "The Living Room Of Cutting Edge Music", the site supports what insane calls the "demonstration of electronic production": in other words, an open invitation to people to post "stuff for public consumption. Go there to download or upload MP3s (it will pass through insane's quality control first), play with virtual sound toys, post to the message board, and subscribe to the mailing list; and before you know it you will be part of the insane community. MP3 Dis will dig the site's most recent development: a streaming MP3 mixer unit which lets you mix together any two of their files. Michel Foucault once cited an imaginary

Chinese dictionary which appeared in a Borges story where different types of animals were divided into categories such as "animals that from a long way off look like flies", "animals down with a very fine comb-like brush", etc. With a similarly surreal appeal, the organizers of [Floppywop](http://www.floppywop.com) ([www.floppywop.com](http://www.floppywop.com)) describe one of their ready-made downloadable sounds as "the noise of lots of things running into each other at great speed". There's not much information about the site's creators, but someone evidently nurtures a nostalgia for swapping those practically obsolete 3.5" floppy disks, and so has created this well designed platform for exchanging and browsing through 1.44 MB files (the file capacity of an old-style floppy). The site lets you collect recorded sounds and composed tracks, and in the media section you'll find heavily compressed Flash films, animations, a downloadable interview with

Mouse On Mars, and other such tidbits. The emails of all contributors to the site are available, should you wish to contact them. Meanwhile, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art continues the adventures in digital art it began with the 010101 exhibition (see *Ether Talk*, The Wire 2006). [Crosstalk](http://www.crosstalk.org) ([www.crosstalk.org](http://www.crosstalk.org)) hosts a collection of sound projects and essays. The Net version's latest offerings are "Information architect" (this is the West Coast, remember) and composer Chris Sailer's essay "The Architecture Of Listening", which explores the relationship between technology and human perception and offers links to various psychoacoustics and network technology sites. Media artist and composer Stephen Vitiello, whose CD *Scratchy Marmite* was released on Supraph last year, presents a random playback of sounds recorded every day throughout July. **ANNE HILDE MEISER**







# Print Run

New music books: devoured, dissected, dissed



Free jazz has David S. Ware (above) to thank for Phil Freeman entering the arena

## NEW YORK IS NOW: THE NEW WAVE OF FREE JAZZ PHIL FREEMAN

THE TELEGRAPH COMPANY PSH \$16.95  
BY ALAN CUMMINGS

The re-emergent US free/eclectic jazz scene has been in sore need of a booklength study. While the mainstream has been well served recently by fine books on Miles Davis, Roland Kirk and Charles Mingus, aside from John Litweiler's *The Freedom Principle* there hasn't really been a substantial overview of the freedom posse since Valere Wilmer's still magisterial *As Serious As Your Life* in the late 70s. Freelance critic Phil Freeman, whose writings have appeared in *Down Beat* and *Jazziz*, as well as the more unlikely settings of the *American Weekly* and *Metal Hammer*, has gingerly attempted to plug the gap. Far removed from the stripes and cocktail background of the traditional jazz critic, Freeman's first love was hardcore and Death Metal, and he has made it his mission to "expose punks and metalheads to jazz, particularly free jazz". Thus, he's in an ideal position to document the current high profile of musicians like saxophonists David S. Ware and Charles Gayle, and pianist Matthew Shipp, whose prominence is due in no small part to the support of non-traditional jazz audiences.

Freeman focuses tightly on what he knows best: the New York scene. He begins with his own epiphanic experience, where his mind was shattered by The David S. Ware Quartet in 1998. The meat of his book is chapters on single players: Gayle, Shipp and Ware, plus bassist William Parker, guitarist Joe Morris, trumpeter

Ray Campbell and multi-instrumentalist Daniel Carter from *Other Dimensions in Music* and the subway-dwelling ensemble Test. Freeman attempts to give a snapshot of the scene around them, with brief chapters on its history, the music's critical reception (a rehash of the old mainstream versus free debate), the showcase Vision Festival, and representative labels like AJM Fidelity and Enmeite (though strictly speaking not a New York label). And he rounds off with a revealing glimpse inside the sessions for the latest, post-Columbia Ware quartet album.

A favourite pastime of teen Metalheads everywhere is drawing up a list: who's Metal and who isn't, who's Heavy and who's not. Freeman is determined to apply the same rationale to free jazz, first by locating a tradition for the music and then defining its tenets. The puzzling inclusion of Joe Morris aside, Freeman leaves most the spirit of eclecticism as manifest by NYC's demolition school. Anything else is immediately designated beyond the pale, and any attempts at cross-pollination with avant rock and electronic musicians are dismissed out of hand. Indeed, Freeman sees the downtown experimental scene as just as dangerous to free jazz as Lincoln Center's neo-bop conservatism. As a result, important free players like outsider saxophonist Arthur Doyle or drummer William Hooker, who have experimented with unorthodox line-ups and non-sensory musicians, are ignored. Yet several of his favoured subjects remark how they would like to take the music to new audiences, "start playing the punk-rock circuit, play some small auditoriums, make it real".

Freeman's style is unashamedly — at times, even engagingly — polemical. With the fire of a new convert after a Damascus experience, he enthusiastically talks up his heroes (anyone who supports the music, himself), and pours scorn on his villains (conservative critics, magazines, record labels, clubs). But his need to see everything in black and white leads to statements that would be laughable were they not so fervently held, nor such old hat. John Zorn is lambasted for not working "respectfully within a tradition", Wynton Marsalis is described as a "messianic megalomaniac", and critic Howard Mandel is maybe "the worst writer covering jazz today". Read on the back of a toilet door, Freeman's blunt-chisel diatribes might be entertainingly satirical, but in print and with little substantial argument to back them up, he comes off as bigoted and shortsighted. While the stuffy formalism of much jazz writing could do with an injection of honest enthusiasm, polemic need to be backed up with some critical insight. Unfortunately, it's here where Freeman falls down. None of the chapters is long enough for a weighty analysis of the music, nor to give the musicians room to speak in their own words. The book reads like a compendium of space-hungry magazine articles, an impression which is bolstered by Freeman's tendency to return to the same handful of albums in different chapters. I was left feeling that I had learnt little more about the respective styles of the main players than when I began. And more tellingly, with little desire to go back to certain albums or investigate new ones.

More irritating are Freeman's need for self-aggrandizement, his parochialism and his

occasionally tenuous grasp on fact and history. The way he tells it, you'd think that he was the music's sole defender against the dark forces of Marsalis and Stanley Crouch — he totally ignores the historically important contribution made by *Forced Exposure* and, dare I say it, *The Wire*, going back to the 80s, or more recent coverage in zines like *Opprobrium* or *Malina*. For Freeman, avant rock interest in free blowing began with the first free jazz releases on Homestead and Henry Rollins's 2.13.61 imprint in the mid 90s, not with Silkshare's pioneering late 80s releases by Ware, Gayle, et al. Parochialism runs rampant, with digs at particular local clubs, magazines and *New York Times* critics. The reader is given little indication of the wider free jazz community, for example the equally vital scenes in Chicago or LA, let alone in Europe or Japan. Which is a shame, as this breed of jazz is now one with an international appeal, where the leading players can draw substantial audiences from London to Tokyo.

But to be fair, the book is intended to be an introduction for Metalheads first dipping their toes into the free jazz ferment. Freeman does succeed in giving a flavour of a small and lightly knit scene, where the musicians are deeply involved in the reproduction and promotion of their work, and there are few barriers between fans and players. The book is one of the few accessible introductions to a music which can be difficult. Freeman may not have much to say to anyone who's been listening to this music for a couple of years, but if he can persuade a few more suburban Death Metal freaks that Charles Gayle can annoy their parents even more than Slayer, then all power to him. □



# JOHN COLTRANE: JAZZ, RACISM AND RESISTANCE

## MARTIN SMITH

REDWOODS Pbk £4.99

BY TOM PERCHARD

This slim, CD-sized book is part of Redwoods' Revolutionary Portraits series, a collection of artist studies written from a Marxist standpoint. If the book's size and subject seem to represent commodity fetish and personality cult, then its content confirms that the author's appreciation of Marxism is as sophisticated as his understanding of jazz's history and John Coltrane's biography, that is, not very. In fact, Coltrane's life and music are discussed on only 16 of the volume's 95 pages. The book's subtitle, "Jazz, Racism And Resistance", suggests why this might be the case, and indeed the idea of contextualising Coltrane's work in such an explicitly cultural-political manner is commendable. Too many historians in love with jazz have ignored the environment that spawned it, whether through lack of interest, dishonesty or fear. But while writers like Frank Kofsky and Lewis Porter have already

started to sound out Coltrane's life and times (in their very different ways), this little book is so confused in method and so compromised by its own creed as to be near useless even as an investigative starting point.

It should also be pointed out from the start that Smith's ideology, if it can be called that, has nothing to do with Marxism, contrary to Redwoods' aim; in fact, analysis of any kind is notably absent, a tone of sixth-form righteous indignation standing in for political engagement. Teasing through chapters on early jazz, bebop and cool, Smith tries to work in accounts of black migration to the North, the burgeoning civil rights movement, the growth of the recording industry and so on; yet his historical data, taken largely from Eric Hobsbawm's books *The Jazz Scene* and *Uncoloured People*, is cut and pasted carelessly, even randomly, and is often trimmed to much as to be virtually meaningless. One 400 word passage describes segregation, the introduction of the US Court of Appeals' 1954 legal wrangles and the chief musical characteristics of bebop ("It places greater influence on several rhythms playing at the same time").

The narrative, such as it is, is chaotic. As well as being unsuitably handled, Smith's historical material is ideologically derived. Communist Party benefit gigs played by jazz groups are listed in several places, as Smith attempts to suggest that the musicians were really all communist activists at heart. At these Communist dances they were always trying to recruit you," Dizzy Gillespie says; then, as here, to engage with the politics of jazz meant reshaping it according to alien ideological patterns rather than listening to what the music was saying for itself. When Coltrane is quoted describing his grandfather as 'militant', and when Gillespie mentions "the black working people", it's apparent that these citations are here merely because they resonate with a contemporary political vocabulary, not through any narrative necessity. Similarly, the book's discography contains records that seem to have been selected according to the significance of their titles rather than their representative musical qualities: Archie Shepp is only represented by *Attra Blues*, Joe Henderson by *If You're Not Part Of The Solution, You're Part Of The Problem*. By the time the book reaches the late 1950s

and Coltrane's career, the thematic, narrative and stylistic confusion is so bewildering that factual inaccuracies don't seem to matter that much. Still, Coltrane leaves the Nuyorican to play with McCoy Tyner and Lee Morgan, both eight years old at the time. A Love Supreme is released in the wrong year; Ascension becomes "Ascensions", and Monk starts a paragraph as "Helenious", and ends it as "Thelonius". Nothing of Coltrane's post-1960 music is mentioned, yet this area of his work cries out for cultural analysis. By then, the saxophonist's complex belief mixture borrowed from astral myth, pan-African symbolism and several different world religions, suggesting productive starting points for the musician's 'political' placement now Coltrane's music really reached the people after he'd himself of apes and tamed to religion, and a similar interplay of destructive and spiritualising impulses was arguably one of the defining characteristics of black America's politics in the 1960s. Smith's brief portrait of Martin Luther King might nearly suggest this, but it's too little, and too late to start listening to the dialogue between Coltrane and his culture.

# PSYCHOTIC REACTIONS AND CARBURETOR DUNG

## LESTER BANGS

PINK STAIN REPORTS' TALK Pbk £5.99

BY HUA HSU

Like it says on the front cover of this latest edition, the occasion for this re-re-evaluation of Lester Bangs is last year's smash film *Almost Famous*. As former Rolling Stone writer Cameron Crowe's title yelled (deliberately, it remembers lovingly pulp writer (Phillip Seymour Hoffman) this way down to earth and supportive when he first meets Crowe's young William Miller character in dreary San Diego, sage and upright when counselling the youngster through his first assignment with the enemy, Rolling Stone; and, finally, lovingly grumpy when he hangs up on William for playing the swill merchants' games. Indeed, he lectures to Miller how you actually believe in the awesome potential of these chords and the truth. *Psychotic Reactions* operates similarly. It's editor Greg Marcus's rendition of Bangs, and perhaps it sacrifices a little wit and splendour catastrophe for direction. In his introduction, Marcus writes: "This book is my version of the work Lester Bangs left behind. It is not a summary, or a representative selection, but an attempt to make a picture of a man creating a view of the world, practising it, facing its consequences and trying to move on." Fine, but sometimes for Lester the meander was the message.

Since its initial publication in 1987, *Psychotic Reactions* has aged well. Certain parts feel more colloquial and chatty than ever, and one constantly wonders whatever happened to the twin poles of integrity and slavish worship that fuelled Bangs's bangs. Marcus tries some of

the bluster and emerges with a flourish of hi/ho, with a few outtakes for taste's sake. The Lou Reed stardom saga is presented intact with its own chapter heading, conveying some sense of the warfare waged when two men worldly dressed with each other get cheek to cheek. There are also some sunshin classics, like "James Taylor Market For Death", "A Reasonable Guide To Humble Noodle" and the title piece. His vitriolic notes on *Beats* are quite touching too. For the easy complete without access to Cream back issues, check Jim DeLoatch's *Let It Burn* but Bangs's majestic "How To Be A Rock Critic". Part of the fun is seeing Bangs manoeuvre through the music and mark at the more depressing business end of music criticism. His ravaging of Chicago is devastatingly six, and he had some impressive ways of writing about things for which he had little interest. In "My Night Of Ecstasy With The J Geils Band", inspiration crashes and he chances upon the most profound thing ever said about P Wolf et al: "YDNEQSNCHSHHEUDEN (+&-S&N-) (E)H?"

Marcus estimates some thousands of pages on Eno, prostitutes, and The Stones that didn't make the cut for this volume. More significantly, LB's premature death at 33 meant he never got to that clarity or perspective where he could truly appreciate (or reject) what he had become – the guy whose name had become a brand which looked pretty cool spliced next to Led Zeppelin on young William Miller's blue bander. Was Lester really a fan like the rest, or is that the image everyone else wanted for him? And did he really like The God?

Maybe the reason we love Bangs so much is because he fulfils some weird fantasy about lovable losers and slipping through the

backdoor to coolness. He wasn't necessarily the smartest or most encyclopedic critic, but unlike some of his surviving peers, he rarely felt the obligation to understand or scope the newest fangled pop. He simply knew what he liked – getting religiously bulldozed between two speakers – and wrote the living shit out of it. But according to Marcus's introduction, Bangs's words felt mismatched, his phrases unsure and lumbering, when he took on an artist he held in the highest esteem – Mingus, Miles, Beethoven, The Stones. The omission of these pieces is unfortunate. Not only do we miss out on an awed, stumbling and speechless Lester growing over time, such pieces would have shown him going well beyond the 'white boys with loud guitars' aesthetic he became so famous for championing.

One of Lester's most infamous articles – "White Noise Supremacy" – gives an idea of both the awkwardness of phrase Marcus referred to and Bangs's occasional White Negrolisms. In an infinitely noble, if not awkward, attempt at investigative reporting of New York's punk and new wave scenes, he digs for evidence to support his theory that these skinny white kids find racism cool, only to end up revealing more about his own hangups. Like his friend Richard Perkins told DeLoatch's, "Lester may have been a saint or a sear by reflex, but not by heart." Alongside his "Drunk Punk Day Pretending He's A Nigger" (not included), "White Noise" is oddly autobiographical, a rather unstable dude growing out of his amateur Lenny Bruce phase and thinking about what an asshole he once was for casually dropping the N word around Bobby Whinnick and David Ruffin. Though some people find this later work awkward and overly "journalistic", Lester was

making some real personal breakthroughs. It would have been good to see where they might have led.

These days, his legend has become synonymous with longwinded sentences which sheltered rock's noisy, obscure or misappreciated individuals. But three of his later shorter pieces hinted at the tender virtues deep inside. His eulogies for John Lennon and friend Peter Laughner – as well as his rumblings on Van Morrison's *Astral Weeks* – speak volumes about his own combustible life, and they end up being the pages least fettered by his coy word games and asides. He concludes each piece unsee, like he's trying to be indifferent to Laughner and Lennon's specific deaths, out of respect for what they represented and what his personal philosophy dictated. But at the end of his New York Rocker piece on Laughner, above the disfigured swath of dystopian martyr chic and ripped T-shirts, he concludes that there is no justice, there's just us.

While Marcus's editing is impressive, it leaves a very stylised sense of who Lester was. His Bangs is grumpy and outrageous, often brilliant and very touching. It's somewhat different portrait from the purist, lewdest Lester that lives in DeLoatch's biography. Careening from friend to friend and occasionally disappearing from sight, DeLoatch's Bangs is a little more in touch with the struggling and writhing that mingled genius with ink. Everyone can find it in them to admit that Lester Bangs's work was great, but most of us end up hating him for it anyway. In conversation with the editor of an American music magazine last year, I admitted to having a thing for Bangs's work. "I guess he was good," he responded, "but he inspired so much crap." I nodded, not quite sure if he was talking about me. ☐



## SONIC BOOM: NAPSTER, P2P AND THE BATTLE FOR THE FUTURE OF MUSIC

JOHN ALDERMAN  
FOURTH ESTATE HBK £17.99

BY JEROME MAUNSELL

It is his spirited presence to this 'story so far' of online music, Herbie Hancock soon cuts to the chase. Criticising the business model of the major record companies for having swindled "artists, writers, and the public for close to a century", he then points the finger at Napster for being "on the way to making millions for its owners and investors" while ignoring the rights of musicians. "Who represents artists in this picture?" he concludes. "So far, it seems like no one." On nearly every page of this tale of the various power struggles – largely between young dot.commers and reactionary record company executives – that have informed every byzantine twist and turn in the birth of music on the Internet, his question remains unanswered.

While author John Alderman's interests here are to look at the past, present and possible futures of music on the Web, the bulk of his focus remains, naturally, on the rise and fall of the Napster phenomenon. At its height last year, Napster had 50 million registered users, and was

being accessed by around 500,000 people every day. For the first time, the almost unlimited potential of the Web as a universal music library was miraculously unleashed, and the Man had no option but to sit up and take notice. Shwari Fanning, the 19-year-old college student who masterminded the program, found himself in the middle of a media whirlwind whose repercussions have only recently become clear. Sadly, none of them is good news for artists or consumers.

With the recent appointment of ex-BMG vice-president Konrad Hilbers as the new chief executive of Napster, the online music revolution – for the time being – has been sanitised. Now implementing technology for copyright protection, as well as operating with a regular monthly subscription fee, interest in this corporate Napster has been dwindling rapidly, unsurprisingly. User numbers have apparently dropped by 90 per cent since February. Meanwhile, the big five record labels – Sony, Viennese-Universal, BMG, AOL Time Warner, DMI – all plan to unveil their individual Napster clones by the end of the year. The way things currently look, each label's side will offer a different variety of music, all with their own different methods of earning revenue and protecting copyright. None

of them will offer downloads, and none of them will be free. While there are plenty of MP3 files still doing the rounds on the Net (roughly one billion, according to Jacques Attali in *The Wire* 2005), the chance of another site attaining Napster's mass popularity remains distant.

Throughout this book, Alderman tries to maintain a neutral, objective stance, but he can't help slipping into a misty-eyed tone as he recounts how the primary utopian objectives of the Web have gone sour. Although it's an easy fact to forget in the wake of the dot.com frenzy of recent years, but before 1991 all commercial activity was officially off-limits on the Web – which was originally built by British researcher Tim Berners-Lee for use by academics around the world wishing to share data. Napster took off so rapidly and naturally, because the way it walked aligned so well with the original architecture of the net.

The pioneering efforts of early net-defunct Web music outfits, such as the Internet Underground Music Archive, are all intriguingly documented here, as well as the initial crafting of the MP3 format by the German research centre Fraunhofer. It emerges that nearly all the subsequent players who preceded Napster, such as MP3.com, Real Audio and Liquid Audio, were

hindered either by limiting themselves to unsigned music, or by trying so hard to please record companies that they ended up having their hands tied by labyrinthine contracts and legislation.

There are plenty of rich stories to be found in Alderman's post-Napster analyses. For one, Napster copyleft GNU/Linux was released by Nulsoft, a division of AOL Time Warner. Its open source status set in motion an unstoppable virus of radically named clone programs, namely Madella, Bagolla, Hagislag and Gnuclius, originating from within the very belly of the industry. Another paradox lies in Napster's fierce defence of its own 'intellectual property', despite its cavalier attitude towards everyone else's creations.

So where do the musicians fit in? Like many of the theory questions raised here, it's hard to say, and Alderman essentially avoids answering them. You can't blame him: after all, the outcome of online music is still very much in the process of unfolding. Sonic Boom might not instil much confidence in the future outcome of this increasingly tangled story, but as a lucid, comprehensive journalistic dispatch from the cyber-trenches, it's required reading for music makers and fans alike. [ ]

## THE MUSIC OF TORU TAKEMITSU

PETER BURT  
CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS HBK £45

BY ANDY HAMILTON

By the time of his death in 1996, Toru Takemitsu had achieved a popularity rare among contemporary composers with modernist affiliations. This was partly due to his eclecticism as the only Japanese concert composer really known in the West, and because of the way he softened the abrasiveness of the modernist tradition he had become part of. But in his concert music and his film music, he seemed to be attempting a synthesis of Eastern and Western musical cultures. Much influenced by the soundworlds of Debussy and Messiaen, he brought back to Japan musical currents which the West had taken from it.

In the first book-length study in English of Takemitsu's music, Peter Burt offers some subtle and sensitive discussion of these and other issues. It's not a biography, so Burt has little to say on Takemitsu's non-musical fame – it turns out he was a writer of detective novels and a celebrity chef on Japanese TV. Though the focus is on the concert music, Takemitsu's large body of film music is briefly and interestingly discussed in several places. The book begins as a PhD thesis, but its origins are well disguised, and unlike similar projects it's engagingly written. Academic discourse is mostly avoided despite the extensive analytic discussions with musical examples, which are always tied in to general stylistic and cultural issues.

The book begins with a chapter on how Western music came to Japan, which Burt includes because the story is so unfamiliar to Western readers. He shows how some 20th century composers favoured an assertion of Japanese identity, others a wholesale devotion to Western values, while yet others sought a synthesis. The "double structure" in the Japanese psyche prefigures the conflict within Takemitsu himself. The nationalist tendency, the *min'yōshū* composers, was popular in World War two Japan. Characteristic of this musical style, and its ilk, is the work of Akira Rikube in the 1954 monster movie *Godzilla*. "Even today," Burt comments dryly, "Japanese orchestras visiting the West have a habit of surprising their audiences with bombastic encore pieces in the *min'yōshū* vein, usually delivered with an appropriately passionate, *karakuse* like conviction."

That wasn't Takemitsu's path, as Burt explains. Almost self-taught, at the start of his career Takemitsu rejected Japanese traditional music – it "always recalled the bitter memories of the war" – and like other younger composers, he wanted to dissociate himself from discredited pre-war traditions. Early on he admired what he called "the splendid quality of Western music," and followed the Western avant-garde, starting from a 1945 "year zero" in music. His early models were Debussy, Messiaen and Webern. In a second phase of his career from 1950 onwards, John Cage was a vital influence, and through him the traditional Japanese aesthetic which Takemitsu had previously ignored. The

clearest divide comes in the late 70s, however, when in the final period of his career Takemitsu abandoned modernism forever, in favour of a neo-Romantic idiom.

The modernist period has the lengthiest discussion. Burt shows how in The *Dances* (1958), Takemitsu was influenced by the ideas of jazz composer George Russell and his Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization. But John Cage was the key influence. Burt argues that Cage's ideas operated like a feedback loop whereby Eastern ideas were reinterpreted from the West to their point of origin. Initially Takemitsu deployed graphic notation and indeterminacy, though the direct influence of Cage wore off. The composer's awakened interest in Japanese traditional music was a general aesthetic one. It rarely extended to the use of traditional instruments, except in one of his most celebrated works, *November Steps* from 1967. Nor did he use Japanese tunes as material: "No power...no development. Japanese tunes are like [Mount Fuji] – beautiful but perfectly eternal," he commented. The high point of Takemitsu's modernist affiliation came with *Ego 70* in Osaka, where he met Stockhausen and other luminaries of the Western avant-garde, and for which he composed *Crossing*, an experiment in spatialisation which shared Stockhausen's futuristic optimism.

Though he claims not to share Takemitsu's film music, Burt has quite a bit to say about it. The composer wrote scores for more than 90 films, including Kurosawa's *Ran* and the Hollywood

blockbuster *Rising Sun*. Burt argues that here Takemitsu was a "highly skilled, professional pastiche artist" – able to provide a *Wabi* soundtrack score or music for a dance scene in *Lothi* style – writing in a populist vein at odds with his modernist concert music. Like Alfred Schnittke and other contemporaries, Takemitsu financed his career as a composer through his film music, but increasingly the film scores became a sketchpad for concert music as its commitment to the avant-garde waned.

Burt rejects the common idea that Takemitsu's music offers a bridge between East and West. The composer himself wrote that "it would not be so difficult to adopt traditional Japanese music into Western music or to blend both. I am not, however, interested in either of these possibilities." Rather, it seems, he looked to the birth of a genuinely internationalist culture. But such a vague aspiration leaves us unsure how to assess Takemitsu's achievement – a problem which the book seems unclear how to resolve. Burt wrestles with the music's failure to exhibit the kind of form beloved of Western academic analysis, and with the fact that Takemitsu's attempt to resolve the "double structure" in Japanese culture ended up producing works of a lush, even sentimental *Ran*escence. It could be that Takemitsu's star will wane, and Burt is not afraid to point to the enthusiasms that have been made of him, even if he offers a partial defence. But though it doesn't really argue to a film conclusion, this is an insightful book which provides the materials for a richer understanding of this intriguing composer. [ ]





Macao

## JAPANESE INDEPENDENT

## MUSIC

FRANÇOIS STOFER (EDITOR)

SONICORE PBM 4 CD EUR 30.43

BY BIBA KOPPE

Living Japan to a lizard is a Coca-Cola bottle, a character in flamboyant agit-poe, theatre-happening and film director Shuji Terayama's 1971 film *Throw Away The Books Let's Go Into The Streets* despaired, "You don't have the strength to get out, do you, Japan?" But already the crises were forming. 30 years ago Japanese pop culture might have been a thrill to American deejis, but the *Throw Away* soundtrack's ragged polyphony of mauling baring, rock rage, street chorus and screaming standard speeches was already bursting its restraints. Once out of the bottle, the lizard didn't so much get bigger as proliferate prodigiously and scatter across the Tokyo sprawl and far beyond. Separated by dispersal, distinct and mainstream media indifference, these lizard offspring evolved in isolation into the richly varied species that make up the present Japanese underground.

Though *Japanese Independent Music* — the greatly expanded English language edition of a French book first published in 1998 — is ostensibly about the 1990s, introductory essays

by Prog expert Shigetsugu Miyamoto and New Zealand born psychohistorical Paul Collett, now resident in Japan, go back even further, to postwar jazz, the 1960s "Grop Sounds" boom, and so on, briskly and efficiently mapping the underground's proliferation. But the other main essay, Michel Henrta's fancifully titled "Extreme Contemporary Japanese Music As Radical Ecstasism," is a hubbubbed mash of Barthes and Baudrillardian thinking applied to noise and, entertainment value aside, is no help at all. Fortunately the 80s timeframe imposed on the alphabetical index of artists that forms the bulk of this book is porous enough to accommodate entries for the lives of such earlier key figures as the late sax nazi Kikuo Abe, frenzied guitar strategist Masayuki "Jolt" Takayanagi and Shuji Terayama's musical director JA Clester. Artists such as these anchor the index's unwieldy bulk. Singerminded and driven, yet extraordinarily varied in his range of expression, from single note Trutone homages to fuzzed feedback assault, Takayanagi in particular is emblematic of the creativity Japanese Independent Music spans. Kaji Haseo, Ado Mothers Temple's Maiko Kawabata, High Rise Ashes Harjo, Meatbowl's Masami Akita and Boudier's have all nurtured vast dynasties of projects, whose complex family trees each require a dictionary of their own. A

glimpse at any one of their entries immediately alerts you to the monumental nature, not to say folly, of this book's undertaking. A further peek inside the teeming Japanese noise scene, starting with Aube, OCCC, Incapacitants, Desecrating Table or, er, Bily?, is enough to make an etymologist despair. Randomly dip in and fan out from any point, and you'll run into no end of dargio, kuzpunk, electro girl groups a-gogo; Japanese stodgeProg (lovers of the heavily namechecked King Crimson will have a field day exploring this cult, clicks 'n' glitchhounds, etcetera and ad infinitum).

In this sense, *Japanese Independent Music* undeniably gives the reader a proper sense of the chaotic nature of its subject. But assuming the scene's shapelessness as the book's structural model is not much help to anyone looking for a guide to negotiate it. Cross-referencing between entries is annoyingly inconsistent, and seemingly important names mentioned in the introductory essays are left dangling without a dictionary follow-through. The English text is sometimes as wonkily entertaining as Jinguish T-shirt slogans or copy written by French, Italian, Japanese, New Zealand, American and British contributors, and edited by François Stofer, head of the French label Sonore, the entries are variable in quality;

erratically proofed and sometimes frustratingly incomplete. They vary from unhelpful oneliners that tell you so little you wonder why they bothered, to scarcely longer yet pithily evocative descriptions of groups such as Superball: "Three high school girl performance dadaists from Osaka. More primitive than The Shaggs. [Boredoms?] Eye was apparently more shocked by them than the first time he saw The Butthole Surfers. Also known as SOS, The Tiger Teens, Death Fuck, Miss Osaka, etc." Well and good. But even here the book gives no indication of their worth — like, whether they had a life beyond the high school hoop. Then, Japanese independent music's lack of an infrastructure restricts many intriguing artists to their own neighbourhood, and it's largely a matter of pet luck that Shonen Knife, Melk Banana or Cibo Matto landed themselves with an international audience and not Superball, Death Fuck or whatever their name might be now.

But any criticism comes across as unnecessarily mean-spirited when set against the generous hearted nature of Stofer's undertaking. Featuring Kaji Haseo (setting down at the crossroad of Prog, New Music and mutant girl/woman pop, in many ways the most significant artist here), KK Lull, Ado Mothers Temple and more, the bonus CD is worth the cover price on its own...[...]

## IN COLD SWEAT: INTERVIEWS WITH REALLY SCARY MUSICIANS

THOMAS WICTOR

LIVEWIGHT EDITIONS PBM 15.10

BY BEN WATSON

Although the title looks daft, it turns out to be an excellent promise. Thomas Wictor taped these interviews for *Bass Player* magazine, and bringing himself and his araxides into the picture — the fan faces the wildman — makes for a dramatic and enthralling read. Details which editors prefer to glide over become part of the story. The bassists he interviews are Gene Simmons from Kiss, Peter Hook from New Order, Jerry Casale from Devo and Scott Thunes from Frank Zappa's group.

True to form, Gene Simmons is the most objectionable, refusing to talk unless his face goes on the cover of the magazine, declaring that women have no affinity for lower sonorities. Simmons spouts bar-room political banalities like they're lessons in life. However, he explodes

when Wictor mentions that the 'SS' in Kiss's logo resembles the lightning bolts Hitler's Schutzstaffeln wore on their collars. He's Jewish, born in Israel, and once rejected the album title *Gas Chamber Music* because it would be "insensitive to what went on in World War II". As one might guess, Simmons is more intelligent on comics than genocide, claiming that Marvel heroes got popular, not because they were Nietzschean Umlerschmerz, but "scary, mixed-up people" like Spider Man.

Devo's reputation for cynicism and stunts is explained as the rock press's inability to grasp satire by some extremely concerned minds. Jerry Casale is analytic and cute, talking about learning to fit together "Boss Mack Respira's parts and playing 16th notes on bass. He defines Devo's amazing cover of "Satisfaction" as a "Jamecan sort of punk". He's still bitter about press treatment of Devo. Despite their differences, Simmons and New Order's Peter Hook are happy with their places in pop music history, a satisfaction which makes them seem

rather uncritical and complacent. Casale, in contrast, wants to re-form Devo and show Nine Inch Nails, Prodigy and The Chemical Brothers how the modern equipment they're using could be used.

Half of Wictor's book is devoted to Scott Thunes. It takes Thunes much effort, but he finally manages to explain to Wictor that despite being the toast of rock bass players — Zappa's music gave virtuosi a chance to shine that is rare outside jazz — he's today much happier out of the industry, jemmung occasionally with friends. Originally a fan of Borko, Stravinsky and the Second Viennese School, he played jazz on bass until he heard Devo's "Moongold" and "gave it up immediately, lost all my friends". Thunes was Zappa's bass anchor throughout the 80s, up until Zappa's last tour in 1988, and then played bass for Zappa's son Dweezil. His turn against Dweezil's metal — he complains that their original "ano-rock" became straight — is fascinatingly described, as is his subsequent involvement with the punk group Fear:

"complicated, hard-edged, fast music that people can actually dance and pogo and freak out to, instead of this analytical hard rock stuff, which only goes to the front of the stage and then stops, energy-wise."

There are some tantalising technical discussions of little understood Papa Zappa's compositions like "Mo'N Herb's Vacation" and of casted fifth in Zappa's guitar solos, but these are eclipsed by the explosive, painful conflicts of the 1988 tour. Thunes was straw boss and the group mutated. What emerges is the kind of larger than life, integrity driven, musically literate character required to play Zappa's genre-defying music: "If you want to look at me and what I deserve, I don't deserve anything because I'm a fucking asshole. But I'd rather be a fucking asshole who can express himself however I want to." It's not easy to get a sense of the person behind a music as glossy, complex and deliberate as 80s Zappa. Thomas Wictor's courage in facing this "scary" bassist was rewarded with a revelatory interview. [...]



# ● On Location

Live and kicking: festivals, concerts, clubs in the flesh





Top: Patti Smith in London.  
Below: The Golden Quartet (left) and  
The New York Art Quartet at Ljubljana  
Jazz Em Agosto Festival

## PATTI SMITH LONDON OCEAN

UK

BY RIBA KOFF

Bedecked in carpets, with a makeshift movie screen and a solitary Vietnamese star hanging down, the stage looks like a cross between Aladdin's cave and Ho Chi Minh's subterranean hideaway. The William Blake illuminations projected onto the backdrop midway through her tremendous 135-minute set complete Patti Smith's pantheon of revolutionary visionaries. If her many other muses — Rimbaud, Keats, Richard, Dylan, Hendrix, Ginsberg and Burroughs — aren't so visible tonight, you sense them standing in the shadows. And just because she's the anti-star least likely to sing "Kill 'n' loll" isn't to say that Patti Smith can't rock as hard as The Stooges. Deep into the sixth year of her second campaign, begun in the winter of 1995 after Bob Dylan coaxed her out of retirement into doubleheading a confidence building East

Coast tour, she's as clear-eyed now as her 70s punk goddess was often so not-starry-eyed. Shipping into view with a mock coy grin acknowledging the crowd's welcoming roar, she and her group — including veterans Lenny Kaye on guitar and Jay Dee Daugherty on drums, with second guitarist Oliver Ray and bassist Tony Shanahan — flip into the self-explanatory "Glitter in Their Eyes" with a ferocity that leaves forerunner the mannered version included on last year's *Gung Ho* album. And just in case the scales were left in any sockets around the hall, they immediately follow it with a scorching "So You Want To Be A Rock 'N' Roll Star," if the group momentarily falter when Smith starts scratching at a guitar some minutes in, no sooner has she found the threshold she was after than they all come down hard on it to send up an intoxicating fog of reverberating overtones. The one-two punch of this opening song dipch, spinning early and more recent Smith repertoire, establishes a set pattern that draws

equally on her first-run albums (*Horses*, *Radio Ethiopia*, *Wave and Easter*), and those from her second campaign (*Dream Of Life*, *Gone Again*, *Peace And Noise* and *Gung Ho*). As ever, she leads from the front, mostly conducting the group with her vocal and, more sparingly, with her guitar or clement playing.

Apparently on the first of her two dates in Hockney she gamely attempted harmonica too. The fortunate first nighters were also treated to her courageous celebration of Ho Chi Minh, architect of the Vietnamese resistance against French and American forces, that is the title track of *Gung Ho*. Writing and releasing such a song in a land of sore losses is no mean feat. The Vietnamese flag behind her only underscores the song's absence on the second night, especially as the four *Gung Ho* songs they do play are immeasurably improved live, with Smith's vocals soaring free of the confined MTV all rockers prodding Gil Norton wheeled them in on the album. Why anyone would want to meddle with

the most expressive voice this side of present day Dylan is utterly baffling. If anything, her range is even narrower than his, yet her instrument is staidier and sturdier, and her command of it is such that she can ripple moodshifts through the crowd with the subtlety of inflections. Her astounding voice charges up as it careers through the sexually rapacious "Redondo Beach", the derelict desire of "Birdland", the drowning niggy "Beneath The Southern Cross", and so on to the closing, angry-elated, north-southwest dialectal doublet of "Don't Say Nothing" and "People Have The Power". First catching the audience off-guard with a surprise encore of The Ronettes' "Be My Baby", she then goes on to floor the lot with the sucker punch of "Babelogue"/"Rock 'N' Roll huffer." If the Hackney drama is momentarily bluish before that tribe's (in)appropriation of black power rhetoric, once she segues into a rant against Bush and other villains of globalisation, they'll forgive her almost anything. □

## JAZZ EM AGOSTO LISBON GULBENKIAN FOUNDATION PORTUGAL

BY DAVID KEEHAN

"In 2001, the avant garde is off the ropes," announced *Wes* contributor Bill Shoemaker during his provocative conference talk, "Jazz And The Frankenstein Dilemma," one of the critical high points of this year's Jazz Em Agosto festival. Shoemaker's points were diamond-sharp: mainstream jazz is rapidly atrophying in the hands of demagogues and revisionists like trumpeter Wynton Marsalis and film maker Ken Burns; the process of local codification has birthed a sick caricature that continues to stagger blankly forward. But thanks to the confluence of a variety of factors — a crossover outdoor rock audience, the continued rise of fan and musician-run festivals and labels — the audience for avant garde jazz "with little or no connection to the mainstream" is bigger than ever before.

Curated for the second year running by Ru Neves, Jazz Em Agosto's programming reflected this swelling demographic with five musicians like original ESP Disk recording artists The New York Art Quartet and the Golden Quartet — the latter boasting a dream team line-up of trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith, pianist Anthony Davis, drummer Jack DeJohnette and bassist Malachi Favors — paired with new bloods like the Rob Brown/Jo Morns Quartet and avant rock/electronic crossover cuffs like Harnet Tubman and Pongis Artizynth, however, the success rate

was mixed. Pongis, a quartet led by New York keyboardist Wayne Horvitz, was a case in point. They clung to the idea that all jazz needed to keep breathing was to simply embrace new technology. Their attempts to graft Prog syntax, samples and beats onto some barely functional jazz shapes were maddening in the extreme. The baby-faced saxophonist — obviously dubbing himself "Skunk" — ran his sax through an effects unit that made it sound like Eddie Van Halen's guitar, while drummer Bobi Previte played some mechanically tick-tock stadium rhythm behind him, getting all the way like he was the first man ever to keep time. Bassist Rossa's Harnet Tubman group, here augmented by Double Trio's DJ Logic and trumpeter Graham Haynes, were slightly more convincing. Ross pulled some winning whammy-bar solos from his headless guitar while bassist Malachi Gibbs, a former member of The (Hercy) Rollins Band, laid out some fairly unsparring grooves. Despite some subtle tuntable work, nothing much actually happened, as endless orbital jams lacking any dynamic were embellished with bloops and scratches.

The only artist to put electronics to artistic use, as opposed to simply trying to sound "contemporary", was the composer Lawrence "Butch" Morris. He chose Jazz Em Agosto as the stage for a world premiere of his latest work, described as a "Local Project," called *Rolling Space*. Morris has moved on from his conduction work — a method that involved directed improvisations — to fully staged composition. Indeed he didn't even appear on stage. Instead

Helge Deves held the spotlight, a powerful vocalist with an almost operatic range and all the bruised sensibility of Jeanne Lee. Flanked by two grand pianos, the group rapidly became immersed in a fog of thrumming electronics and ghostly samples courtesy of JA Deane and guitarist Stephen Ross. Far from being a mere accessory, the new technology was essential to the realisation of the piece. Matthew Ship's solo piano set felt similarly charged, even if it was uncharacteristically reminiscent of Cecil Taylor. Between felt, jarring rums and dramatic states of punctuation, Ship dropped in little nostalgic sketches before flipping them on their head and pushing onwards.

Le Grand Loussard's are a 13 piece orchestra from France that attempt to revive the freedom orchestra tradition of Charlie Haden and Sun Ra. Here they sounded more like an aggregation of several small cells rather than a fully functioning big band. While alto saxophonist Daunk Lazo and trombonist Fabrice Charles evinced a spirited sense of adventure, tenor saxophonist Laurent Charles was embarrassingly inarticulate, especially when attempting to duel with a peering low-flying neoplane. Worst of all was the nod-drumming of Eric Echampard, who popped the balloon with a fart every time the orchestra were about to get airborne. Still, if anyone gave was what you were after, you'd have got a rise out of The Golden Quartet. Trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith spat beautifully curving solos over some elegant arco basswork from original Art Ensemble Of Chicago bassist Malachi Favors. Jack DeJohnette, who has played

on some tuned-up clangers since his tenure with Miles Davis, really turned it all around with his inventive playing on a beautifully tuned drum kit, echoing the epic lines of Wood's trumpet and Anthony Davis's stark piano.

The New York Art Quartet — drummer Milford Graves, saxophonist John Tchicai, trombonist Roswell Rudd and bassist Reggie Workman — with the poet Ann Boskoff as a special guest — played a raucous set in the venue's vast main auditorium, with Tchicai moving between knee-buckling saxophone solos and streams of treated vocals, while Rudd let out some big New Orleans peels over Graves's all-singing, all-dancing electronic invasion tactics. Hearing and seeing Graves in the flesh was totally disarming. His kit was tuned so low it caused your insides to vibrate. Yet it was the Rob Brown/Jo Morns Quartet, with bassist Chris Lightcap and drummer Whit Dickey, that really burned, magically playing an all-improvised set of superlatively structured ensembles. Guitarist Morns was on particularly smoking form, sculpting huge sheets of notes into an ever-flowing canvas for the rest of the group to rain down on.

Earlier in the festival the French critic Alexandre Perrenot had bemoaned the idea of "progress" in jazz. It's a tall tale. What jazz needs to keep going is unique voices, musicians brave and sure enough to stick to their own vision and create their own soundworld. Yet again, as a snapshot of where jazz is now and where it is heading, Jazz Em Agosto was extraordinarily present. □





BY DAVID ELLIOTT

With no Glastonbury and not much else in its stead, serious UK festivalgoers have had to look further afield this summer. And while few would have been able to make it all the way to Japan, the Fuji Rock Festival nevertheless confirmed its status as one of the world's major music events. Branching off Masa Hekula of Smash, the festival spreads along a valley in the Japan Alps and has the kind of audience Glastonbury's Michael Eavis would give his right arm for: no drugs, no trouble, no arrests. If that sounds boring, then 90,000 punters would disagree. But pöllö,

Friday waded up quickly (literally – it was 35 degrees by 10am when the gates opened), and provided an early highlight with an astonishing set from The Bonedogs, billed for the occasion as VOORE!!!!!!!HOOOMS. Two years ago they had played a relatively (for them) straight rock set with two drum kits, guitars and Yamatsuka Eye upfront roaring like and screaming like a madman. This time they went for no less than six drummers, no guitars and with Eye anchored, as much as anyone can anchor Eye, behind an altar of turntables and FX. The result was one long 70 minute piece that was truly symphonic in scale.



Saturday opened with one of the most interesting of the Japanese acts: Ryoji from Tokyo. Their combination of violin, guitar, bass, keyboards, effects and two drummers (one just isn't enough for the Japanese!) made for a heavily rhythmic, retro sounding affair that, like The Boredoms previously, built slowly and peaked frenetically, but unlike Eye and Co., they kept their mouths shut and feet firmly on the ground. The crushing, doomladen guitar sound of Mogwai was next to up: so thick it was like being wrapped in a blanket, and so intense it was difficult to bear more than half an hour of its sod, esparting beauty. A nostalgic trip with Echo And The Bunnymen preceded a deeper delve into the past with Neil Young And Crazy Horse. Having successfully transformed himself into a kind of "godfather of Grunge," Young continues to live up to his name: rarely less than age 40, and with hard-



On Sunday the action was mostly on the White Stage with a roster of alternative dance acts from the UK. Andrew Weatherall and Keith Tennison's *Two Lone Swordsman* played an excellent set of subtle rhythms and live electronics while Warp labelmate *Squarepusher* pumped up the volume and intensity with his jazz-tinged, heavy drum 'n' bass. With *Autoclave* having pulled out at the last minute, festival favourites *Orbital* were drafted in and gave a decent enough performance. "Mammets" and the Dr Who theme from the latest album and old favourites "Satan" and "Chime" were crowd pleasers but the brothers rather seemed to be



Mountain people (clockwise from top left): Erv Squerepusher, the Field of Heaven, Yamatsuku Eye, The Boredoms, Coldcut, the Avelon Field, Neil Young





Aunt Safties and Houston live: Ossi Varti (left) and Kimmo Polonen

## KONEISTO FESTIVAL TURKU KUPITTAA PARK

FINLAND

Finland may be a land without Elvis, as Fat Beat Sound System's Hesa Niemi told me after one too many bottles of red wine, but it is a land with Kimmo Polonen. Polonen isn't about to kickstart a youth/racial/sexual/social revolution the likes of which the world has never known, but he has certainly done more to make the accordion sizz than anyone since Cajun squeakers Nathan Abshire, Amélie Andon and Clifton Chevier, and with his Houston fin hairstyle (which he had before the fact), wild stage persona and restless imagination he looks set to enjoy a career of being censored from the waist down on any number of JoJo's Holland programmes and The Late Review. After all, 3000 Kimmo fans can't be wrong.

An accordionist, no matter how avant garde, at an electronic music festival is certainly a strange sight and a potentially uncomfortable fit. However, the relaxed, horripant Koneisto (Machinery) wasn't your average electronic music festival and, with a battery of effects pedals (11 by my count, from the back row of a packed amphitheatre made of gravel, pine and carves) that Ozzy Osbourne's saviour Randy Rhoads would envy, Polonen is not your average bellows blower in a Briton sailor's shirt whizzing out endless variations of "Prince Of Spain". Instead, Polonen wears a gold lamé jacket and red trousers, taps on the accordion's buttons producing a cavern of riddles and

indulges in an extended passage of glasscolala which avoids Bobby McFerrin territory by sounding like a group of monks Gregorian chanting, smacking their lips and undergoing EST treatment. He played with two percussionists — one fingerclapping a drum machine, the other with a kit comprised mostly of chimres and cymbals — and produced an extraordinarily creative, if a bit unpolished, set of squeezebox dub. With his onstage antics and bizarre use of sound, you could almost say Polonen is the Finnish Lee Perry. During the dry passages, when he uses just the bellows to huff and puff, it could be Pan Sonic up there, but even when he strays into seaside shanty territory, his model still seems to be the synth pulses of Chain Reaction. At the same time as Polonen's set, there was apparently another accordionist leading a group playing power oompah versions of techno classics of yore. Must have been something in the air.

Well, there's certainly something in the water in Helsinki, because the rest of the festival was dominated by various versions of electro and electro-pop. In the Korento pavilion (a kind of pre-fab venue constructed out of corrugated tin and plastic and projection screen walls that hearkened back to the Finnish plastic house of the 60s), Mr. Volcra Fastener once again lived up to the premise of their name with a blustering set of Dopplereffekt style minimal electro but, as far as I can tell, without that Detroit group's mock fascist overtones. A crowd of a few hundred people packed into this jewel box of a bar were popping like it was 1978, shaking the place to

its foundations and shouting obscenities into the mics recording the concert for a simulcast on Finnish national radio. At one point some guy who looked like a tugboat captain emerged from the crowd and blessed the mac in Finnish while wielding an oversized softball bat. A couple of hours later, Ossi Bastards' TA Kaukialampi and Norway's Annie (of "Greatest Hit" fame, and now a beautiful Kiss jacket, by the way) followed Marco Pasarian's militantly minimal electro set and produced the festival's other highlight (aside from Polonen) with a two hour set of fierce, unrelenting electro that culminated in an ascending electro version of T. Rex's "Get It On" that once again had the crowd testing the limits of Finnish construction.

The Bastards themselves played a fine set that sounded like Suicide covering "Fade To Grey", but they valiantly attempted to make a stadium show out of it, with 3000 looking like one of the guys from The Proclaimers in cowboy tassies and drumming with a fluorescent light. They were perched on stage in the club tent by Aavikko (Desert), who were sort of Kraftwerk meets The Mar-Kays, both in sound and appearance. They were matching suits and tunics and slicked back hair, and played like a beret/ritzy band desperately trying to combine the "Peter Gunn" theme with the Iron soundtrack. Elsewhere, the Ural 13 Diktators brought back the spectre of H-NRG in pink berets, while the fabulously named Chainsmoker had even more of a John Ford/Visage vibe, but were doubly alienating because they sang in Finnish.

Finnish was made surprisingly elastic by

groups like Cerebrotones, a HipHop crew who need to spend as much time on their beats as they do on making their mother tongue fit into the rhythmic structures of rap, and Kaptenei Ääli (Captain Voice), who made very good militant, Finnish raggas. The most promising Finnish HipHopper, though, may be Peltolies, who raps mostly in English. However, his set in the Kupittaa Sports Hall was sidestepped by live backing that featured a fretless bass (yeah), not the sort of thing that befits a guy who dropped Narni Chernsky's name and lectured about the plight of the Native American on the Finnish equivalent of Top Of The Pops.

Jimmi Tenor's missus Nicole Willis, fetching in a green and orange Marinikoko number, performed a more tasteful, jazzier, distaff version of her hubby's lovelorn schtick with guitaristikka Mattia rifling like Nile Rodgers on Norma Jean's debut album. While other 'big name' acts like Red Snapper and Ladytron suffered in the Sports Hall's cavernous dynamics, and New York minimalist Taylor Deshpere was frustrated by technical problems in the Korento pavilion, noodes Ossi Varti created another of the highlights with their "Rhythm and the repetition of rhythm show" by the festival's entrance, three guys with their heads and arms thrust through seaside Xanti Sali's photo cut-outs — but instead of beefcake and chesecake, they looked like they had been designed by Ralph Steadman — playing sax and twisting knobs, creating brittle, angular electro like they were in downtown New York circa 1983, not on the coast of the Baltic Sea in 2001. □





Worship apart: Fun-Da-Mental (left) and Natasha Atlas

# **FUN-DA-MENTAL + NATASHA ATLAS LONDON SCALA**

BY BEN WATSON

This was a fifth birthday party for the Beggar's Banquet offshoot label Mantra. The copper-embossed ticket simply read "Natasha Atlas + Guests" though they have now left the label. Fun-Da-Mental gamely supplied all the guests anyone could possibly need (plus collecting money for the dependents of the late, great Bim Sherman, and providing a table for the Free Capital Ram campaign). Usefully, they supplied a contrasting version of cultural fusion to that of the headline.

Natasha Atlas and her seven piece group provided the 600-strong capacity crowd with a careful blend of big gangsta beats, Bollywood strings, semi-Oriental folk and percussive pantomime. Hip-hop beats are a powerful symbol of modernity, though it's noticeable that while playing Atlas's chansons, the musicians can't raise excitement except by playing their modal intervals faster and louder. Techniques developed for peasant shindies sound limited once they reach the PIs and presentation of the First World. Whereas jazz and hip-hop splice the horizontal rush of modern beats with harmonic variety, Atlas presides over a curiously staid soundtrack: passion is reserved for her rai-style vocals. Only a curmudgeon could disapprove of converting "La Vie En Rose" and "I Put A Spell On You" into Orientalist pastiche, though using a Hi-NRG disco beat (actually

pipe-band drum rudiments) to signify inevitable Mantra is distinctly cheesy. Atlas's comments ("This song says things don't last forever, so we should appreciate what we have") reinforced the impression that, despite the banging beats, her folk represents haven't yet been pummelled into something urgent and relevant. A bodhran joined the tables for a final rhythmic workout, a ska hit providing an opportunity for a guesting human beatbox to split the difference between toasting and kamataka's counting vocals.

When Fun-Da-Mental exploded onto the stage — two guys pounding Sikh dholaik drums dangled round their necks, a Public Enemy-style seven loop, two rappers bellowing slogans — it was clear how evocation of the exotic diva tames Atlas's music, and represses her players. They look like hired hands, while Fun-Da-Mental are a crew of manic ruttors who crack these beats because they crave to hear them explode. Disappointingly, half the audience had left by the time they left the stage, and by the last number the audience had dwindled to a cheering posse of 30 supporters ("The liberals have gone, you're the militants") was one comment from the stage). Time was running late, and teams needed to be caught, but it seems even the New Asian Underground cannot avoid the sullen fact that well-worn images make a more saleable commodity than rousing music.

Radical theorists point out again and again that the so-called "divisions" of World Music are an illusion. True devotees of sound thrill to everything from electric guitars to stone gangs to

dried gourds to computer chips. Yet it's rare to see a name group with the courage to dump constructed, identity-confirming images and put the theory into practice.

One reason Fun-Da-Mental's jumping-jack opening sounded so strong was that it wasn't toytown HighGog (karaoke shouted to a mimetic soundtrack). Tunes are usually based on some crazy sample from Aki Nawaz's Roland PC200 (Aki, "Quests" on album sleeves, is the hirsute Shahn Rhyder of the group). His loops act like a mythic guitar; the dholaik stage show acts as a drum kit. The rappers, Mush Khan and Dave Watts, are both singers and rmc percussionists, with a high "Yo!" acting like a cymbal splash. As Joe Carducci put it in the tablet he brought down from rock mountain, *Rock And The Pop Narcosis*: "It's the purposeful impression of the drummer in response to the purposeful impression of the bassist and guitarist as the three of them chase down a song-mal's particular spart incarnation that excites the listener." After Fun-Da-Mental, what needs to be added is: using whatever means necessary to sound these frequencies. Lloyd Sparkes also provided turntable beats and bass guitar worthy of Colin Wolfe.

Fun-Da-Mental are confident enough in the value of traditional music to present them raw and undistorted. It was fascinating to watch the members of Riwaz Mukozim Qawwal, splendid in their robes, take their places on the floor amid the group's technology. When Peter Gabriel produced Nasir Fatah Ali Khan, he imposed 4/4 regularity on his asymmetrical beats and

ruined them; Fun-Da-Mental exploded martial beats behind the singers, but because the collision of cultures was spontaneous, it sounded terrific. As these samples of gospel (shades of Black Box) and their own vocals look at the singers, causing amused consternation and extra effort, this is the land of "World beat" 23 Skidoo and Sins Of Ancestry used to aim at: an ecstatic, unprecious amalgam.

Shabnam Khan sang a song accompanied by nothing more, or less, than suseena and tabla played by traditional musicians. As the authentic ring cycles swept the brain into recessive mathematical confusions, one noted that the tune was pretty much a sea shanty. The question of what to do with the riches of ethnic traditions once rural populations have been driven in to work in metropolitan hellholes is as old as the blues. Aki's sampled collage of collective religious singing — Jewish, Muslim, gospel — interpreted religion as active human community rather than competing paths to transcendence: a grassroots ecumenical militancy which looks less like holy mystification than international socialism.

"World Music" is the most recent attempt to answer the musical questions raised by accelerated urbanisation. However, as voiced here by a brilliant version of "Anarchy In The UK" — delivered to a looped tabla beat by a deadlocked, beaming Lloyd Sparkes — the "world" is actually what we do in the here and now, not some distant adventure image of peasants up a mountain. Fun-Da-Mental: a great modern wake-up group. □



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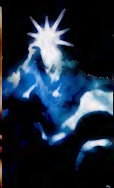
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# Out There

This month's selected festivals, live events, clubs and broadcasts.  
Send info to [listings@thewire.co.uk](mailto:listings@thewire.co.uk), fax +44 (0)20 7436 5760  
Deadline for October issue: Friday 7 September



John Oswald (left), Karl Rasner

## UK Festivals

### ALL ANGELS FESTIVAL 2001

**LONDON**  
A packed evening of improvised music presented by Mark Wastell's Sound 323. The night features electronics duo Furt, AMM percussionist Eddie Prevost, The Sealed Knot, James Saunders & Andrew Sparling and Martin Knapgar & Steve Beesford. London St Michaels and All Angels Church, 28 September, 7.30pm, £6/£5, 020 8348 9356

## International Festivals

### ARS ELECTRONICA

**AUSTRIA**  
Incredibly listed in *The Wire* 210 as taking place in Austria (apologies for any confusion caused), Europe's leading electronic arts event actually happens this month. Subtitled "takeover: Who's Doing The Art Of Tomorrow", the festival combines a heady mix of conferences, exhibitions, concerts, events and performances. Vladimir Delay transforms the sound environment of a local park with a daytime installation and two performances (2 and 4 September). Doan Levin creates a concert from the sounds of the audience's mobile phones (2), and the event culminates with a concert featuring Beethoven from Blechdorf, Radl66, Lassez, Cyclo, Christen Nicolai and Ryōji Ikeda (6). The event also covers interactive work, digital animation and Web art and design. There will also be an awards ceremony for the winners in the various categories of this year's Prix Ars Electronica (see *The Wire* 208). Lies, 1-6 September, various venues, times and prices, [www.ars.at/takeover](http://www.ars.at/takeover)

### LA BIATTE

**SWITZERLAND**  
The music programme of Geneva's premier cultural event features Fred Hauser's Drumlines (2 September), nuovo fieneno guitarist Tuvettis (2 and 3), the Platine Lantabile project featuring Thomas Brinkman, Erik M., Janes Schaefer, Project

Dark, Philip Jack and Di Goo (8), Linton Kwee Johnson (14) and Trifia bassist, curated by *The Wire* and featuring Polo, Jaki Webb, Burt Friedman and Carl's Jaki Linberten (15). Geneva various venues, 30 August-15 September, various times and prices, 00 41 22 738 1919, [www.bate.ch](http://www.bate.ch)

### THE BIG CHILL AT NAXOS

**GREECE**  
The multi arts festival ships out to the solitary Greek island for its second festival of the summer. Sun worshippers can bathe in live sets from Shur-I-Kan, The Rays, Jay Eiderby & Aneston Brooks, Mandaly, Another Fine Day, Laura B and Eva, plus DJ sets from Luke Vibert, Matt Black, Pete Lawrence and more. Naxos, 20 September-3 October, 020 7686 8080, [www.bigchill.net](http://www.bigchill.net)

### ERAATIONAL

**NETHERLANDS**  
The fourth annual festival of audio art and electronic music includes performances by Charlemagne Palestine, Christian Fommers, Fuchheide, Brian Lubke, Kalle Matthews, Janek Schaefer, THU 20, Conne, David Stavers, Marc McIntyre, Christa Van Serien and others. S'Herengracht Museum, 30 September-7 October, 00 31 73 612 2123, [www.eraational.org](http://www.eraational.org)

### ENCINTRAOS ACARTE 2001

**PORTUGAL**  
Atlantic festival featuring some big names from music's experimental jkt set including John Oswald, Robert Ashley and The Residents. 13-30 September, Lisbon, 00 35 1 21 782 3483/3474, [www.gubbenkan.pt](http://www.gubbenkan.pt)

### GUELPH JAZZ FESTIVAL

**CANADA**  
Concerts, workshops, panel discussions and jazz on the streets at this community-focused international festival. Major concerts include the Glen Hill Lee Ranaldo, Ray Anderson and Gerry Hemmings quartet (6), George Dawes, Frank Gratkowski, Kent Kessler and Hamed Drake quartet (7), Bill Frisell & Kevin Breckin and Marilyn Crispell & Gerry Hemmings (7), Sun Ra Arkhiste under the direction of Marshall Allen, Andrew Hill, Chicago Underground Trio (8), Kevin Breckin & Cyro Baptista's Supergrass (9)

Guelph various venues, times/prices vary, [www.guelphjazz.ca/~jazzfest](http://www.guelphjazz.ca/~jazzfest)

### HIGH ZERO

**USA**  
Baltimore improvised music festival featuring different combinations, from solos to big bands, drawn from a pool of 30 local and international improvisers including Mike Cooper, Peter Kowald, Lukas Ligeti, Kalle Matthews, Dean Roberts, Leslie Ross and Jason Willett. Also expect site-specific and random outdoor concerts organised by Baltimore's Tom Bostan Baltimore Theater Project, 13-16 September, individual concerts \$10, festival pass \$40, [www.hizero.org](http://www.hizero.org)

### MONASTERY OF SOUND

**FRANCE**  
Fourth annual festival of electronic music on the 50 acre site of an ancient French abbey featured live performers and DJs include Apache 61, Janek Schaefer, Si Begg, Rampe and others. Normandy Abaye de Blanchelande, 14-16 September, £80 (including coach from London) or £20 at the gate, 01462 713828, [www.lemonastere.com](http://www.lemonastere.com)

### OSTRAVA NEW MUSIC DAYS

**CZECH REPUBLIC**  
Annual Czech new music festival includes a rare performance of an orchestral work by Phil Niblock, a world premiere of works for three orchestras by Christian Wolff, Arvo Part and Earle Brown, John Cage's Concert For Piano And Orchestra, works by Morton Feldman, Luigi Nono, Sonnet Satoh, Petr Kozik and György Kurtág, and performances by local folk ensembles. Ostrava Janáček Conservatory, 27 August-1 September, 00 42 0 69 611 1443, [www.cornet.cz](http://www.cornet.cz)

### SONIC SCOPE

**PORTUGAL**  
Electronica and Improv festival featuring Skapetates, Soundtrap and Mago Electra (14 September), Viro/Johnny Benediton and Manuel Mota/Margareta Garcia (15), Lisbon, [sonicscope2001.no.sapo.pt](http://sonicscope2001.no.sapo.pt)

### SUMMIT SUSPENSE

**AUSTRALIA**  
The Wire is a media sponsor of this new convention

for independent electronica and HipHop labels and artists. The event comprises panels, workshops and live events over a six day period. Among those in attendance will be the UK Fat Cat label, Anticon, Hovvitz, and Wire editor Rob Young, Newcastle Conservatorium of Music and other venues, 26 September-1 October, AU\$533 registration, [www.soundsusmt.org](http://www.soundsusmt.org)

### SOUND TRAVELS 3

**CANADA**  
Two day festival of sound featuring outdoor concerts, installations, soundscapes and workshops put together by Darren Copeland. The first outdoor concerts of multi-channel tape works include the world premiere of hyper-acoustic composer Paul Diller's new installation work, John Oswald's one-note composition AD, plus works by soundscape artists Håloged Westerkamp and Francis Dhomert and a collaborative work between David Logo and composer/performer Sarah Peckles. There are opportunities to listen to the Toronto island soundscape on a series of guided soundwalks, as well as a forum to debate its quality. Also happening in parallel is soundscape radio workshops, Deep Radio ([www.ctcp.org](http://www.ctcp.org)). Toronto Galianter Point Centre for the Arts, 1-2 September, various times and prices, [www.intefrag.com/~ctcpoc/toriso2.html](http://www.intefrag.com/~ctcpoc/toriso2.html)

### TAKTLOS-BERN 01

**SWITZERLAND**  
This year the intensive festival, which is co-sponsored by *The Wire* and Germany's Spex magazine, pursues two distinct themes. The event opens with a performance of a new work exploring the history of Goan by the extraordinary vocalist Fatma Mianista, then continues with vocal prototypes from improvising greats David Moss and Phil Minton. The night ends with Queens Listening from Little Plateau's Curt Davis and fractured future funk courtesy of Jarmal Uddel (14 September). The second evening's centrepiece is a new multimedia work by Heiner Goeban with Les Percussions De Strasbourg, followed by the digital disobedience of Verma Thomas Brinkman, Kuf606 and Jaki Mardel (15). Bern Kulturhaus Dampfbastei, 00 41 31 312 1206, [www.taktlos-bern.ch](http://www.taktlos-bern.ch)



**sound. 2001**  
**summit**

a gathering of independent  
electronic labels and artists

september 26 - october 1  
newcastle, australia

Six days of panels, forums, workshops and multiple stage live events with over 200 independent electronic and hip hop labels from Australia, New Zealand and the rest of the world.

Covering all aspects of independent operations from production through to distribution and performance. Featuring special presentations from **The Wire** magazine, **Anticon**, **Hrvatski**, **Fat Cat Records** and the finest electronic artists from the South Pacific pushing the ethics and aesthetics of independence.

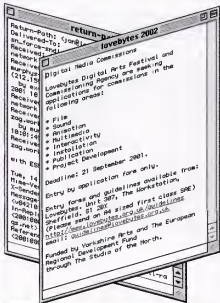
**\$33 REGISTRATION**  
**2 HOURS NORTH OF SYDNEY**

Daytime venues: Newcastle Conservatorium of Music  
Nighttime venues: Everywhere

Travel subsidies are available for Australian labels

**www.soundsummit.org**  
For more information and online registration

Second Summit 2006 is part of the  
This is Not Art series of festivals



steinischer:bst

[orf.at/musikprotokoll](http://orf.at/musikprotokoll)

graz, austria, 11.-14. october 2001

**musikprotokoll**  
im steirischen herbst

**ORF**

**musikpro**

**Raiffeisen.**  
**Meine Bank** 

This project has been funded by the Australian Council on the Arts through the Contemporary Music Development Fund.



# from 'japanorama' TOSHIMARU NAKAMURA YASUKATSU OSHIMA

**Thu 20 September** 01392 667080

Exeter Phoenix, Exeter \*

**Fri 21 September** 01736 796888

Guildhall, St Ives Festival \*

**Sun 23 September** 01672 5666

Gate Gallery, Dublin

**Mon 24 September** 01604 604222

Roadrunner, Northampton

**Tue 25 September** 0141 553 1638

33rd Note, Glasgow

**Thu 27 September** 0161 274 0600

Contact Theatre, Manchester

**Fri 28 September** 020 7392 9032

The Spitz, London

\* with special guest

Yumi Hara

extreme japan tour



Shelley's New Add

## X-TRACT CHICAGO GERMANY

Key figures in Chicago's vibrant post-rock/post-punk community travel to Europe for this hands across the Atlantic event sponsored by The Wire. Performers include Shellie (11 September), Goat Island performance group (13-15), an installation work by Anna Wagner/Ryborg (13), Carlotta Red Crayola with David Grabbe (20), Oliver Block, Postleg (see above), David Grubbs, Noel Akchoti & Quentin Rollet (21), IV Pow, Town & Country (22), Mats Gustafsson & Jim O'Rourke, Chicago Underground Duo meets Jim O'Rourke, Rob Mooney solo (23), Ribbon Effect, Twitter with Sarah Moon (24), Eivind (25), Lou Marini, Mats Gustafsson, Michael Wolfeld, Illusion Of Safety, Nicolas Collin, Tony Buck (26), Berlin Podewil and other venues. 11-26 September. 00 49 30 247 498. [www.podewil.de](http://www.podewil.de)

## X-TRACT CHICAGO AUSTRIA

This sister event to the main x-tract festival organised by Berlin's Podewil venue (see above) features the Postleg quintet of Gene Coleman, Oliver Block, Werner Defelbacher, Michael Moser and Burkhard Ströng, plus David Grabbe & Noel Akchoti (23 September), IV Pow and Illusion Of Safety (24), Oliver Block solo in a duo with Boris Hartl, plus Chicago Underground Duo (25), Vienna Porgy & Bess. [www.chicatom.com](http://www.chicatom.com)

## Special Events

### BEYOND THE POINT

#### IRELAND

Installation by Irish sound artist Dany McCarthy based on a new instrument created from the strings of an abandoned piano, recorded in the lighthouse near where the piano was discovered. Cohn Sinus Arts Centre, 7 September-4 October. Free. 00 353 21 463 2809

### CREATIVE MUSIC WEEKEND

#### UK

An opportunity for performers and composers to get practical experience with tutors Keith Tippett, Brian Irvine, Ian McCurdy and Damien Newton. Areas covered includes performance, composition, improvisation/rhythms and electronic music. Belfast Crescent Arts Centre, 14-16 September. £75. 0773 313 4558

### DMC WORLD DJ CHAMPIONSHIPS

#### UK

The climax of this global battle may see the coming together of turntablists from 32 nations from Argentina to Czech Republic, London Hornet's Hornet, 22-23 September. £15. 0870 5344 444. [www.dmcworld.com](http://www.dmcworld.com)

## DOCLANDS DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL

### IRELAND

Includes films on Enslavement, Neobauten, John Cale and Nick Drake as well as a showing of Unfinished Symphony, a feature length documentary on the Vietnam Veterans Against the War protest in 1971 set to the music of Gorecki. There will also be a special performance by Chicago's wilderness post-rock unit The Bokeh Ensemble. Dublin Temple Bar Music Centre, 29-30 September. 00 353 1 670 8117. [www.doclands.ie](http://www.doclands.ie)

## HERTZ-LION EVENINGS

### USA

Sustained eclectic series of four weekly concerts put together by composer and general inverte David Corner. Flash Express, ND (6 September), International Metal Supply David J (13), AMM, German Shepherds (20), Beyond Joy And Evil, Spastic Colon (27), Los Angeles Alienist at the Knitting Factory Thursdays in September: 7-30-930pm. \$7 per concert. [www.knittingfactory.com/kfa](http://www.knittingfactory.com/kfa). [www.hertz-lion.com](http://www.hertz-lion.com)

## HOW TO SCREAM FOR REAL

### BELGIUM

Concert series and workshops with leading exponents of extreme viewpoints. Concerts feature Lydia Lunch (20 September), David Moss & Suzanne Self (24), Diamonda Gales (25) and Pakistani singer Ustad Ghalam Hassan Shagun (27). The workshops last between one and ten days (17-30). Gent Arts Centre Vooruit. 00 32 9 267 2828. [www.vooruit.be](http://www.vooruit.be)

## IMMANENT CHOREOGRAPHIES

### UK

As part of a conference dedicated to "Delete and Neo-Aesthetics", The Wire is co-curating a concert featuring Scamozzi, Oval and Jan Cassese. The conference also includes panels on Deleuze's influence on Architecture & Urbanism, Politics & Ethics, Music & Visual Arts, Performance & Sexuality and Musical Arts. London Info Modern, 21 September. 7:30-9:30pm. £6/£3. [www.info.org.uk](http://www.info.org.uk)

## INTERMEDIA OFF-SHOOT EVENT

### IRELAND

Weekend festival of sound art featuring Cohn Fallow's new composition for noise machines (1 September), Robert Hanson's guitar, tape and processing concert (2) and works by Phil Niblock (3). There is also an installation by Jenck Schaefer called Skein based on the sound of skeining records. Sound art programmed to random play 11-20. Cork Insult Arts Centre, various times and prices. 00 353 21 427202

## LMC WEBCAST

### UK TO THE WORLD

Themed in an occasional series of audio art and

artistic diversions, rebroadcast by the London Musicians' Collective, "Once Upon A Time In The Waste" is intended as a celebration of low order technology and confirmed contributors so far include Simon Lucas's Chinese live stones, live electronics and circuit bending from Response, William Treacy courtesy of Sharon Gal, and new Japanese video courtesy of Paul Hood. 22 September. 5-11pm. [www.lmc-c.org.uk](http://www.lmc-c.org.uk)

## PHILL NIBLOCK

### GERMANY

One-off concert by the extreme New York minimalist (who seems to be everywhere this month). Installation for the venue, a sponsored cultural centre, Hamburg. Rote Flora, 22 September. email [doehne@lignis.net](mailto:doehne@lignis.net) for more information

## PSYCHEDELIC SEWAGE/

## DESTROY ALL MONSTERS

### UK

A two-part exhibition of artwork by The Wire's very own Savage Penel held by the Chamber of Pop Culture. Psychedelic Sewage features a selection of drawings old and new, while the second part presents the Penel's illustrations for Destroy All Monsters, an apocalyptic sci-fi blockbuster by The Wire's media blasters correspondents, Ken Holling, which will be published by Markon Books later this month. London New Hospital, 3-29 September. Monday-Sunday noon-6pm. 020 7833 3644

## TEAR YOUR MOTHER RIGHT

### UK

A curious project by La Recherche! electronic eccentric Richard Thomas, in which he invites a variety of musicians and artists to transform two floors of designer Paul Smith's West London store Thomas performs with customised computer hardware and external effects. Half Nuln uses electro-magnetic pluggers to sound out the shop's infrastructure. Fatboy crowns radios and drum machines with telephones. Machine Funnies feeds as acoustically enhanced sewing machine, and The London Toy Orchestra play new and old songs on children's toys. London Paul Smith store. 8, 15, 22 September. daytime, free. 0789 001 4002

## On Stage

### BJÖRK • MATMOS • ZEENA PARKINS

### + INUIT CHOIR

Debut bill for this month's cover artist, supported by the digital surgeons, electric harpist and Greenwald's friend, London St John's Smith's Square (29 August), London English National Opera (23 September)

### BOLA • GESCOM

Skam Records signees and Autechre's alter ego perform at an exhibition launch of graphics from

Club Integral presents  
live in concert

## Bing Selfish and the Ideals

launching their new CD  
Dizzy With Success  
now available on Alcohol  
ALB51CD

+

## Die Trip Computer Die

old CD We Are Your Friends  
still available on Alcohol  
ALDT2KCD

**Tuesday 11 September**  
**12 Bar Club**  
**Denmark Place**  
**London WC2**  
**020 7209 2248**









The Love Grocer (left), Toshimaru Nakamura

Befin's Lodown magazine. Also features live performances from Pops November and Ploech, Ols, visuals, skate ramp, cums wrestling and giveaways Birmingham Custard Factory 28 September; www.capsula.org.uk

**BOXHEAD ENSEMBLE**  
Chicago collective which currently includes Fred Lohberg-Holm and Jan White come to Europe to play improvised soundtracks to a programme of short films. London Horse Hospital (24 September), Manchester Contact Cinema (25), Bristol Redgrave Theatre (26), Dublin Docklands Festival (29 and 30), www.truckstopmedia.com/boxhead

**KIM CASCOINE**  
San Francisco electronic musician headlines an evening of "Electronic Audio for the 21st Century" which also features recorded material from the Staalplaat label, two installations plus Ols. London 291 Gallery Bar, 13 September, 9pm-1am, 020 7265 9780. www.editionsonary.org (Cascoine also appears at this month's Spout. See Club Spaces)

**ELECTRELANE**  
Brighton's avant rock heroes. London Electric Cinema, 4 September, 9-11pm. £8/£6. 020 7229

8688. www.picturehousecinemas.co.uk  
**DIAMANDA GALAS**  
The dark diva returns. Support match wailing and gnashing of teeth. London Royal Festival Hall, 20 September, 7:30pm, £22-£17.50, 020 7960 4242, www.rfh.org.uk

**GRANDMASTER FLASH**  
Hip-hop original appears alongside Q! Pogo, The Nextmen, Ross Allen and Strut Players. London Electricaven, 14 September, 10pm-6am, 020 7837 8419

**GREW TRIO**  
Free improvisation trio on tour. Stephen Grew (piano) Mick Beck (saxophone) and Phil Meeks (drums) play London Killier (13 September), Chesham & Gloucester College (14), York Black Seat (17), Lancaster Gregson Centre (20)

**PI HARVEY + MORIS TEPPER**  
Patsi Smith's biggest fan, with ex-Magic Sandsman in support. Glasgow Barrowlands (25 September), Manchester Apollo (27), London Bredon Academy (30)

**KID606**  
Tigerbeard's top terrorizer tour. Birmingham Custard

Factory (10 September), Glasgow 13th Note (12), London 93 Feet East (13)

**LOB WITH LOX COXHILL & SIMON HOPKINS**  
Electronic jazz improv from London based sextet, who become an octet for one night with improvising guests. Brighton Sussex Arts Club, 9 September, 8-11pm, £5/£4, www.artsclub Brighton

**LOVE GROECER + VIBRONICS**  
Double header of live dub Brighton Concordia, 20 September, 9pm-2am, £7/£6, 01273 207241

**TOSHIMARU NAKAMURA + YASUKATSU OSHIMA**  
Two stars of the Japonesque tour return to play a string of dates. The no-musl mingling, manipulating and the Gwanan folk musicians play Exeter Phoenix (20 September), St Ives Guildhall (21), Dublin Bridge Gallery (23), Northampton Roadminder (24), Glasgow 13th Note (25), Manchester Contact Theatre (27), London Spitz (28). For the Exeter and St Ives shows, Yami Hara is added to the bill

**OUT OF BODY ORCHESTRA**  
Lol Coxhill guests with the 15 piece Deiftord big

band which includes Charles Hayward, Nick Payne-Oliver, Ashleigh Marsh and Ian Scott. London Concordia, 6 September, 8:30-11pm, £4/£3, 020 8469 0536

**THE RESIDENTS**  
Following the success of their show at this year's Meltdown, the West Coast eyeballs return for a one-off concert that combines live performance and film footage. London Royal Festival Hall, 14 September, 7:30pm, £20-£12.50, 020 7960 4242, www.rfh.org.uk

**THE SEALED KNOT**  
London-Berlin improvising trio of Burkhard Baier (percussion), Rhonda Davies (harp) and Mark Westall (cello) play Chesham & Gloucester (25 September), Cardiff Chapter Arts Theatre (26), Sheffield Moorland (27, day), Huddersfield University (27), London All Angels (28), Reading Rising Sun Arts Centre (28)

**BING SELFISH & THE IDEALS**  
Launch concert for Bing's new Dizzy With Success album supported by Alcohol laboratories One Top Computer etc. London 12 Bar Club, 11 September, 8pm, £6, 020 7916 6989

# UK Radio

## National

**BBC RADIO 1** 97-99 FM

**JOHN PEEL**

Tuesday-Thursday 10pm-midnight

The indie nation's bible

**GILLES PETERSON**

Wednesday-midnight-2am Post Acid jazz

**FABIO & GROOVERIDER**

Friday 2-4am Intergalactic from 'n' bass

**WESTWOOD RAP SHOW**

Friday 11pm-2am/Saturday 9pm-midnight

HiPop Revis

**REGGAE DANCEHALL NITE**

Sunday-midnight-2am Bass culture

**BBC RADIO 3** 90-93 FM

**LATE JUNCTION**

Monday-Thursday 10:15-midnight

New Music compendium

**JAZZ LEGENDS**

Friday 4-5pm Archive recordings

**ANDY KERSHAW**

Friday 10:30-11:30pm World Music

**JAZZ ON 3**

Friday 11:30pm-1am

Modern jazz in session and concert. This month: Tony Bean (7 September), Greg Osby (14), Ojane Bane (21), John Scofield (28)

**WORLD ROUTES**

Saturday 1-2pm

Lucy Owen presents a tourange of global music. This month's special: Sessag's Orchestra Barabab (1 September), new Jewish music (22), Vietnamese music in Paris (29)

**JAZZ FILE**

Saturday 6-8:30pm

New sax part documentary on Miles Davis presented by Ian Carr. Stars 8 September

**HEAR AND NOW**

Saturday 11:15pm-1am New Music magazine

**MIXING IT**

Sunday 11pm-midnight

Hyper-electric mix of avant sounds

## Regional

**BBC LANCASHIRE**

95.5/103.9/104.5 FM, 855 MW

**ON THE WIRE**

Saturday 8-10pm

The Wire's Steve Barker mixes it up wildstyle

**BBC MERSEYSIDE**

95.8 FM, 1485 MW

**PMS**

Sunday-midnight-2am Eclectic mix of avant sounds

**BBC SCOTLAND** 92.4-94.7 FM

**FROM BEBOB TO HIPHOP**

Wednesday 7-10pm, Sunday 10pm-1am

Jazz and nu beats

**CABLE RADIO** 89.8 FM

(MILTON KEYNES)

**THE GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS**

Friday 10pm-midnight Eclectic avant mix

**KISS 100 FM (LONDON)**

**PATRICK FORGE**

Sunday 10pm-midnight Eclectic jazz-rock-jazz mix

**FROST AND HYPE**

Sunday/Monday midnight-2am Jungle

**4 HERO**

Monday 2-4am Jazz jungle, cyber-soul, breakfasts

**MATT JAM LAMONT**

Wednesday 2-4am More breakfast, science

**LONDON LIVE** 94.9 FM

**SOUND STEEL**

Monday-midnight-2am

Mad music from the Nkya Tune mob

**CHARLIE GILLET**

Saturday 9-10pm Rock, World Music, R&B and more

**RANKIN' MISS P: RIDDIMS & BLUES**

Sunday 11pm-2am Strictly roots

**SURF 107 FM (BRIGHTON)**

**TOTALLY WIRED**

Daily 11pm-1am Leftfield independent/dance mix



## SUICIDE

New York's original electro-punks. London 93 Feet East, 25 September, 8-11pm, www.93feeteast.co.uk

## JUNE TABOR

Captivating English folk singer whose repertoire now includes more modern material alongside the traditional ballads and ballads. London Union Chapel, 28 September, 6-10, 020 7226 1686

## TELSTAR PONIES + BILL WELLS

The Wills David Keane reviews his soul folk rock group for a tiring with Geographic Lubliner Bill Wells, Birmingham Flapper & Fines (19 September), Bristol The Coter (20), London Arts Club (21-22), Manchester Star & Gator (23)

## DYLAN VAN DER SCHYFF QUARTET

Imp. improvising drum from Canada with locals John Butcher, Matt Hutchinson and John Edwards. London Vortex, 6 September, 8-10pm, £6/£5, 020 7254 6516

## WHITEHOUSE

Extreme electronics too still terrorising wiring victims. London Road 28 (28 September), with Aeroplane and Con-Don, Leeds Loomie Club (29 with Aeroplane and Mivaner Seiden), 07940 079615, www.sussexlive.com

## Club Spaces

### BAGGAGE RECLAIM

Imp. electronics and neo-pop monthly. The month sawed poor from Pocket, an frustrated lecture on sound from Niteglobe magazine, acoustic drawing from The Strong Machine, theatrical pieces for voice and electronics from Ed Bennett and Steve Halford, and songs with a beatbox from MC

Richard Sanderson. London 12 Bar Club, 30 September, 8pm, £8, 020 7916 6989

### CARE IN THE COMMUNITY

Multimedia club night with a strong visual identity and a wide and discerning music policy. Dedicated New York producer Angela guests on 25, London Herbi, 11 & 25 September, 7-10pm 2am, free, 020 7613 4462

### CHIRIBASTON

The Belman brothers' heart for improvised and leftfield music. Metastasis (Magpie Nooks, John Russell, Gus Seagrove and Mark Sanders), Adam Bolman solo, and Jonathan Bolman solo (10 September), Ditzons, Alex Innes (Michael Rodgers & Anthony Gurney (17), Neil Metcalfe & John Ranganath, Adam Bolman & Simon Rose, Jonathan Bolman (24), London Bessington Centre, Mondays, 8pm, £4/£3, 01932 571323

### CONSUME

Quality leftfield weekly north of the border, this month featuring a host of Records right with Tickle, Bill Wells and Xavier Charles (1), Kim Cascone and Brian Lavelle (11), Toshimaru Nakamura, Yousaku Oshima and James On Complex (25), Goodspeed (28), Glasgow 13s Note Cafe, 8-10-midnight, 24, 0141 955 1636, www.consume.freeserve.co.uk

### DESTINATION OUT

Leftfield electronic radio show 'Destination 1st' takes to the clubs with live electronics from Finland's Opi Rastasto and AA Vikko. London Corgi, 8 September, 8pm-1am, £5/£8, 020 7739 3440, www.corgi-london.com

### EXTRA

Irregular 'slow sound' sessions for 'reliant series and electro-punkers'. DJs plus engrams by Mouse London Public Life, 16 September, 6-10pm, free, 0207 375 2425, www.stakz.net

### FINESTYLE

Resident DJ (and Wire) studio And Chagale's early evening club. This month's guests include dub, reggae and ska from 1 Bronx (6 September), Piccadilly Records/Philippe Jermine (13), Creaks/Records from Rastafish (20), Leaf Records'

Tony Morley (27), Manchester Centre, Thursdays, 6pm-midnight, free

### FLIM FLAM

Imp. and beyond from Jeffrey Morgan & Simon Feil (19 September), Anna Tomlinson with Steve Benford & Roger Turner, Tim Clark with O' Food & Steve Noble (26), London Royal Bar, last two Wednesdays of the month, 8-10pm, £5/£3

### HAYWIRE SESSIONS

Lane Swordsman Andrew Westhead appears with Radioactive Man live, low man scratch new Disco Oxyas featuring DJ Gratchops, and others. London 83 Feet East, 7 September, 8pm-3am, £10 admission, 020 7427 3293, www.93feeteast.co.uk

### KEEP IT UNREAL

Mr Scruff takes over the East London space with special guest Tessa Whitelaw. London 93 Feet East, 14 September, 9pm-2am, £10/£8, 020 7247 3293, www.93feeteast.co.uk

### KLINKER

Packed evenings of improvised music, poetry and performance, this month featuring Roy Marsh, Paul Dunsell, Gill Gibbs & John Adams, Christine Dachs and Emu (4, 6 September), Nick Beck, Stephen Goss & Phil Marks, Frog Pig (12), Tony Hill's Fiction, Bohman Brothers and Dark Karaoke (20), Paul Dutton & Bob Colquhoun, Angeline Conaghan & Tim Cullinan, Nathaniel Catchpole & Eddie Probst (27), Distinct Vibes, Ben Shell Orchestra and Bicycle Club. London 30 September, 8-10pm, £10/£8, 020 7247 3293, www.93feeteast.co.uk

### KLINKER SOUTH WEST

The North London improv space visits Devon with a huge bill including Jon Hitchcock, Mike Westbrook & The Sea, Nick Brook Band, Ian McLachlan, Phil Merton & Hugh Metcalfe, Anne Quince performing from inside a dubbin, local electronic duo Colander, video from James Roy, 18mm films from Andy Graham, plus comedy by Sir Gordon Wren. Eastern Phoenix Arts Centre, 15 September, 8-11.30pm, £7/£3, 01392 667080, www.theklinker.freeserve.co.uk

### KLINKER DORSET

Another awayday for Hugh Metcalfe's improv club, featuring The City Gents and Sir Gordon Wren. Worth Matravers Square & Compost, 16 September, 1pm, free, www.theklinker.freeserve.co.uk

### KOSMISCHE

The Krautrock club recently celebrated its 15th birthday. Captain K play live, plus Staatsbürger Markus Diermer and Les London Updates at the Garage, 29 September, 8pm-3am, £5, www.kosmische.co.uk

### OFF PACE

City Centre Offices label night with live performances from Harman & Karna, Geloni/M Kim, Remote Viewers and Christian Kline, plus Verbal Form Ds. Manchester Contact Theatre, 3-10.30pm, free, 0161 854 3569

### ROTATIONS 6

Short singles sessions with GOMOPRahs, Possett and Blumfield, Manchester Britons Pottery, 22 September, 8-11pm, £2, 0161 881 5965

### THE SPRAWL

Live electronics from San Francisco's Kim Cascone and Bio-Tonic. London Global Cafe, 7-10pm-midnight, £4/£3, 020 7287 2242

### X CHROMOSOMES

Two women in electrical evenings promoted by the Low And Axler label night with 14 September, 8-11pm, free, 020 7247 3293, www.93feeteast.co.uk

### XEN

New live showcase. Chamber Orchestra play live with Oisín Si Beag and Special Squad. London Corgi, 27 September, 8pm-1am, £6, 020 7739 3440, www.corgi-london.com

## Incoming

### LAURIE ANDERSON

Conceptual artist, violinist and wordsmith performs work from her new album Life On A String. Coventry Warwick Arts Centre (2 October), Bristol Colston Hall (3), London Royal Festival Hall (5)

### ELEKTRONIK

Major London festival, co-sponsored by The Wire, featuring performances of Stockhausen's electronic works directed by the composer himself. The festival also includes supporting performances by Adams, Twin, Tully Singh with Jim Hassell, Massive Attack's Craig Armstrong with London Sinfonietta, William Orlik, Gars' Irmel Schmidt and a related film programme curated by Ralph Mark Webber. London Barbican, 13-18 October, various times & prices, 020 7638 8891, www.barbican.org.uk

### FAUST UK

Krautrockers come again. London Royal Festival Hall, 12 October, 020 7960 4242, www.rfh.org.uk

### MIND YOUR HEAD

UK "A Psychedelic Trip on the South Coast" featuring heads old and new, including The Ods, Gong, Acid Mothers temple (3 October), Hawkwind, Add N to (4), (10), Pretty Things with Arthur Brown, The Soft Boys featuring Robyn Hitchcock. London Royal Festival Hall, 020 7960 4242, www.rfh.org.uk

### NUITTERS WITH ATTITUDE

Launch event for the Mad Pire CD of the same name. To quote from its manifesto, Mad Pire seeks to "celebrate madness in all its forms as a means to affect social revolution". Synthesizers – none, insane, emulated or in between – are invited to come along. Performers include Alternative TV, Ceramic Rites and Skinny Millions. London Garage, 1 October, 25 entrance includes free copy of the CD, 020 7607 1818

### NO MUSIC FESTIVAL

The Nihilist Spasm Band's long-awaited noise festival visits New York. Line up includes Borbetomagus, Incapacitants, Shaving Ray Lewis, Garbatomagus, Thrasion Music, Art Lindsay, Cosmic Raycs, Hysaidmon with Kim Gordon, and more. New York Town, 11-14 October, 001 212 249 8950, www.noisefest.com

### DAVID SYLVIAN

Two nights of Sylvian song. London Hammermith Apollo, 14-15 October, 0870 400870

### JAN WOBELLE'S SOLARIS

The bassman takes to the road on a Contemporary Music Network tour sponsored by the Wire. Wobelle will be bringing a new grab featuring Harold Budd, Chris Deane, Bill Carroll and Graham Haynes. London Corgi, 23 October, Glasgow The Arches (22), Manchester Contact Theatre (23), Leeds The Warehouse (24), Kendal Brewery Arts Centre (25), Brighton Dome (27), Coventry Warwick Arts Centre (28). www.cventures.org.uk

Out There Items for collection in the October issue should reach us by Friday 7 September.

For 44 (020) 7438 5766, [info@thewire.co.uk](mailto:info@thewire.co.uk) Do not send us listings as attachments: they will be trashed. All listings information should include a contact phone number, start time and ticket price. Listings can not be taken over the phone.

The Nihilist Spasm Band and **TONIC**

## No Music Festival

October 11-14

New York City

Thur. Oct. 11

8 PM  
Gert-Jan Prins & Cor Fuhler  
(with special guest I-Sound)

10 PM  
CNMC & Christian Marclay

11 PM  
Incapacitants

Fri. Oct. 12

11 PM  
Hilekadan  
(with special guest Kim Gordon)

10 PM  
Nihilist Spasm Band & Thurston Moore

Midnight  
Interplay

the amazing arts involving session

Sat. Oct. 13

1:30 PM  
Borbetomagus & Shaving Ray Lewis

10 PM  
Keynote/Due Process

11 PM  
Nihilist Spasm Band & Joe McPhee

Midnight  
Interplay - more amazing...

Sun. Oct. 14

Reynolds/CNMC Chamber Noise Ensemble

the Americas

8 PM  
Arto Lindsay & Rodney Graham

Tickets are located at 107 North 4th Street, between Desmarcy and Rivington, www.noisefest.com

Advance tickets available for visiting shows. Your \$45, \$10 and \$5 tickets include \$15 and \$5 on from Ticket, Other Music, www.noisefest.com, www.noisefest.com, www.noisefest.com

The Americas Society is located at 886 Park Avenue, at 68th Street.

For the Americas Society's complete information contact 212 249 0501 x601, www.americasociety.org

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October 11-14, 2004

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The Nihilist Spasm Band & Joe McPhee

No Borders

October 11-14, 2004

Located in Frontier 17A, North Coast, Manhattan, New York

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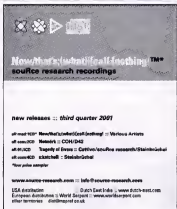


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Medulla is the third release on Discus by Transient V Resident, my wide ranging electronics group with Chris Bywater. On this CD we've created a series of works which combine sophisticated structures with immediacy of sound, and we hope it will fascinate you. We were helped by master violinist Kemaishi Singh, by the grittily grounded guitar of Benjamin Bartholomew, and by the lost-art trumpet work (from the 1930s) of John Lewis. As usual, we've been beautifully recorded and packed in factory produced CD is priced at just £6.99 including P&P. Why? Because we love you. Or why not take a look at [www.discus.cwmc.net](http://www.discus.cwmc.net) and see what else you fancy from the back catalogue? *'The most absorbing electronic music I've heard for a long time'* – Rubberneck *'Kinda Cluster goes seriously classical again'* – Ultimate Thru. *'You can almost hear the machines think'* – Sound Projector. You won't usually see Discus releases in the shops because I don't work with any distributors, so you need to order direct from me at PO BOX 656, Sheffield S10 3YR (enquiries to Discus), or you can email me your credit card details. I remain your hucklebunny.

Martin Archer













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**Rooster include**  
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Shita Letta, Ko-Weck Technique (DJ Ooze & Push Button Objects) and others

**Brief history**  
Chocolate Industries was started in late 1997 by Seven-3 and Push Button Objects in Miami, Florida. We relocated to Chicago in late 1999. Since then we have tried our best to release music which reflects our upbringing musically and socially

**Statement of intent**  
Chocolate Industries is a collective of producers, vocalists, craft writers, graphic designers,

skateboarders, breakdancers, musicians, etc. Our main purpose is to live life and express it through our various crafts. We have no intentions of being some sort of supergroup, but just a platform for the kids who grew up listening to Bad Brains, Afrika Bambaatae and Herbie Hancock, and who can all come and chill and relate and not feel alone. Just kidding... but something like that

**Other activities**  
Boombastic and outdoor radio attack: Chocolate Industries takes over a park in Chicago, 400 kids bring boomboxes and transistor radios... tune into

the Chocolate pirate station while Chicago's best DJ lets rip for four hours and break havoc. An illegal operation that the cops can't and won't touch. No soundsystem, no huge speakers - we win

**Pushy Plans**  
Push Button Objects' Ghetto Blaster, Diverse LP Jam and many others...

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# Epiphanies

**Crass's empowering  
avant punk reminds  
Chris Sharp that  
anarchy in the UK is  
in rude health**



White punks on hope: Crass

November 2000. Dusk is thickening, and the rainswept gloom of Manchester's Oldham Street is all too familiar, despite the fact that I haven't lived in the North West for more than a decade. I spent much of my adolescence foraging in this quarter of the city, which was transformed in the aftermath of punk as rows of rag trade workshops and warehouses were converted into a fluctuating population of secondhand record stores, indie boutiques, wholefood cafes and radical bookshops. On this particular afternoon, I'm back in town to see *Godspeed You! Black Emperor!*. In the semi-legendary Vinyl Exchange I encounter some of their entourage who, escaping from the tedium of set-up and soundcheck, are doing a little foraging themselves. And, like me more than 15 years ago, they are in there looking for records by Crass.

As a committed and politically motivated collective striving to exist as far apart as possible from the music industry's established channels of promotion and distribution, *Godspeed!* are perhaps as close philosophically to Crass as any current group. Their peripheral concerns are surprisingly similar too – both groups hand-design(ed) and hand-assemble(d) their artwork and packaging; both added multimedia elements to their live shows in the form of experimental films and projections. But whereas *Godspeed!*'s artistic standing is sacrosanct, that of Crass is all but non-existent. Post-punk contemporaries like the Gang Of Four, Wire and The Pop Group are seen as daring innovators, crucial precursors of post-rock and models of excellence, but Crass – well, they were just a bunch of ideological bootboys, weren't they? And so the group have been marooned forever in the fagend of punk, the griminess of the Winter of Discontent, the spiralling unemployment of Thatcher's Britain, riots in Brixton, Toxteth and Moss Side, and war in the Falklands, and, hovering malevolently over everything, the cold logic of Mutually Assured Destruction.

Crass had ferocious and intelligent things to say about all this and more, but they have paid a familiar price for their relevance to their own time – obsolescence in ours. Like the Situationists before them, they instinctively grasped that consumerism was a form of mass manipulation, but they never enjoyed the fashionability of Debord and Vaneigem. And although their concerns anticipated those of George Monbiot, Abolitionists and the anti-globalisation campaigns of the No Logo generation, their open and committed espousal of anarchism has left them looking gauche and dated from the perspective of the 21st

century. It's a great shame – in this era of media saturation and multinational capital, their message is as vital as ever. Besides, ideological considerations apart, Crass were a fantastic group. Better than they themselves realised.

In 1984, the "Thatchergate" tape hoax – a mocked-up conversation between the Iron Lady and Reagan during which the American president threatens to nuke Germany – put Crass at the centre of a media storm. It's ironic, then, that I discovered them thanks to a oblique reference in a *Smash Hits* review of a New Model Army album, which described them, if memory serves, as "anarchist chart-toppers". That fleeting glimpse was enough to connect with mental images of city centre graffiti and an enticing aura of secrecy and subversion – and it sent me off to Oldham Street in search of music. Paying no more than £4.99, I returned with a spartan black box. In it lay the masterpiece that is *Christ: The Album*.

Crass's Penny Rimbaud has been quoted as saying, "We weren't in a band for musical reasons, we were in a band for political reasons. Artistic or aesthetic considerations didn't really come into it... I don't think that we were in the least bit involved in developing as a band." And indeed, Crass's first release, *The Feeding Of The 5000* (an EP, with 17 tracks, released in 1979), was fuelled by little more than breakneck vitriol and the sneering yelps of singer Steve Ignorant. Scratchy, urgent gems like "Punk Is Dead", "Do They Use Us A Living?" and "Banned From The Roxy" were all animated by the group's pariah status and their urgent quest to reclaim the high velocity three chord trick from the right wing thugs then emerging under the banner of Oil. But, consciously or not, Crass did develop beyond that early template: *Stations Of The Cross*, released later the same year, opened with a bleak Krautrock photostatic called "Mother Earth", while tracks like "White Punks On Hope" incorporated spare, attenuated reggae and splashes of abstract noise.

They suffered for it at the time, but the fact is, Crass were radical hippies before they were radical punks. They were older than most of the "street punks" that emerged alongside them, they had art school backgrounds, and they lived in a commune in semi-rural Essex. G Sus, whose black and white gouaches and collages adorned Crass sleeves and inspired a whole school of protest art, has admitted that she and Rimbaud shared a wide interest in music beyond punk: "We were affected a hell of a lot by The Beatles, especially towards the end, and the John and Yoko

stuff... when The Pistols started, we thought they were fantastic... musically, we loved Benjamin Britten and jazz and classical stuff." That breadth of influence had to filter through at some point, and it did during the unusually extended sessions for *Christ: The Album*.

The record arrived in 1982, festooned in refusenik artefacts – including a booklet called "A Series Of Shock Slogans And Mindless Token Tantrums" – which served to indicate just how desperate and contorted Crass's mindset had become under the pressure of state hassle, music press scorn and the menacing darkness of life under Thatcher. And the music is just as desperate and just as contorted. The guitars are endlessly mobile, buzzing and squealing, rushing up to nerve-jangling dissonances, spitting energy and stray frequencies in all directions. At times – "Ninety Eighty Bore", "Burnholer" – it's like being in the middle of not, caught in an angular clash of feedback and pummeling, rhythmic tom-toms. Tape-spliced blipverts punctuate the tracks – vicious juxtapositions of political inanities and advertising idiocies, through which desperation and contempt shine clear.

But alongside these striking, strident statements, *Christ: The Album* also admits subtlety and sonic innovation. The daring, dubby silence at the heart of "Beg Your Pardon" offers reverberated guitar chimes and mournful feedback that predate Sonic Youth's *Bad Moon Rising* by three years, while the intuitive feminist drift of "Birth Control" picks up where *Odyshape* by The Raincoats left off. "Reality Whitewash" builds to a triumphant trumpet fanfare grotesquely at odds with the bleakness of the lyrics, while the strange, spice age swell of "Sentiment" sounds like a mangy descendant of the "Neptune" movement from Holst's *The Planets*.

Despite this artistic blossoming, the end was almost in sight. Ahead lay the impenetrable, collaged claustrophobia of 1983's *Yes Sir, I Will*, followed by the disbanding that they had always promised was their response to the arrival of an Orwellian 1984. But although bitterness and desperation are the fuels that burn so intensely on *Christ: The Album*, the group had not then lost all hope. The record closes with a live recording of a CND rally, the speaker's voice vibrant with purpose: "Looking at you now, I know one thing – we can win. I want you to... I want you to seize your own strength." ☐ For more information on Crass and their *Dial House* campaign to raise funds for the commune they have lived in for the last 30 years, go to: [www.southern.com/southern/label/CRC/](http://www.southern.com/southern/label/CRC/)



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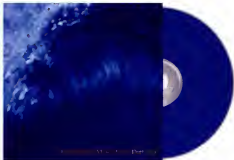
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